# The GIANT MOOSE

ELLIOTT WHITNEY

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The Boys' Big Game Series

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# THE GIANT MOOSE

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# THE GIANT MOOSE

BY

ELLIOTT WHITNEY

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Chicago

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# The Giant Moose

## CHAPTER I

### THE LEGEND OF THE GIANT MOOSE

"Better make up your mind to go, Mr. Niles."

Mr. J. W. Seymour leaned back in his swinging office chair, cocked his head on one side and bent a jovial smile on the man who sat at the end of his desk. Mr. Seymour was the owner of one of the largest pine mills in Menominee, Wisconsin. He was a large, hearty, jolly man, with a big, shaggy head, a broad face and great hands that still bore signs of the time when he had been a lumberjack in the Wisconsin woods. He was wealthy now, but it had not spoiled him and he lived on terms of jovial familiarity with all.

The one whom he addressed as Mr. Niles was clearly a city type. His limbs were finer, his hands slight and white, his face sharper and keener, with the trace on it of the worry and struggle of life in a big city. To look at the two, you would have thought they had little in common,

but they were bound by two strong ties. One of them was lumber; Mr. Niles was a lumber operator in Chicago and did much business with Seymour's mills. The other bond was hunting. Each loved a good hunt better than anything else in the world.

They had never been on a big hunt together. They had run off into the woods a few times and got a deer; but that did not count. A deer was nothing to either of these hunters. They wanted something bigger and for many seasons they had talked about going into Canada for moose. Mr. Seymour's lumbering interests had often taken him into the moose country and he was full of zest for a hunt there. It was now late summer. Mr. Niles had just completed a big deal with Seymour and the latter had been urging him not to postpone their trip any longer.

Mr. Niles played some time with a miniature axe that served as a paper weight, before he replied.

"I don't see how I can do it this year, Seymour," he said at last, shaking his head. "I really don't."

"Oh, come, come," said Mr. Seymour laughing.

"You're rich enough. Come with me and we'll have a great time. I can show you some big country up there and I know where the moose are so thick that you have to sleep in the trees to keep them from stepping on you."

Mr. Niles laughed in turn at the other's exaggeration but continued to shake his head. "I don't see how I can get away," he went on.

"Of course you can," urged Mr. Seymour with the enthusiasm of a boy. "Look here." He brought his chair upright, leaned down, opened a drawer and picked out a map. "Look here!" he said again, unrolling the map and spreading it on the desk. It was a map of western Ontario, in the region of Lake Winnipeg.

"Here's some country I want to visit and I want to visit it with you." He pointed it out with his thumb. "All along the English River here. We can get to Kenora on the Canadian Pacific, outfit there, go down the Winnipeg in canoes to White Dog, where the English River comes in, and then go up that in canoes. It's ninety miles to Lac Seul and it's through moose country all the way. I hear about it every time I go up that way and I want to go in there."

At the mention of the name of Lac Seul, Jack Seymour, a lad of sixteen, who had been a silent but interested listener, jumped off his chair and hurried to the desk.

"Lac Seul?" cried Jack in excitement, leaning over between the two men. "Why, that's where the Giant Moose is, up in that country!"

Both men turned to look at him. They had forgotten his presence.

"Ho, ho! It is, is it?" laughed Mr. Seymour, good-naturedly. "Well, Jack, Mr. Niles and I'll go right up and get that moose. Won't we, Niles?"

The boy was a little hurt by the man's banter and he showed it. Mr. Niles, observing the look on his face, was moved to show a more serious interest in what he had said.

"Tell us about this Giant Moose, Jack," he urged kindly.

Jack was in two minds about it, fearing his father would poke more fun at him, but he was so full of the subject that he could not keep it to himself.

"Why, there's a big moose up in there that people have been trying to get for years," he ex-

plained. "It's the biggest moose that ever has been seen; bigger than any they ever get in Nova Scotia or in the Northwest. And it must be awfully old, because the Indians tell about having seen it for years and years, up there around Lac Seul. The Indians are superstititious about it now, and they won't shoot at it. They think it would bring bad luck, or something like that. Oh, it's a whopper!" Jack's eyes stuck out in his excitement over the Giant Moose.

"That's worth giving up your business and going for, isn't it, Niles?" said Mr. Seymour, still more amused.

Mr. Niles did not laugh. Perhaps he wanted to, but he would not hurt the boy's feelings.

"Where did you hear all about this Giant Moose, Jack?" he asked.

Jack turned to him with his answer, paying no attention to the chuckles in which his father still indulged. Mr. Seymour thought more of Jack than he did of his right hand, but he did not like to show it and took this way of hiding it. He was like a good many other fathers.

"Why, Jan told me," the boy replied. "Jan lived up at Lac Seul for two winters and was at

White Dog nearly two years. Want to see Jan? He'll tell you all about it." Jack made a move to go to the door.

"Who's Jan?" asked his father, serious for a moment.

"You know Jan Jaeger, dad. Axel Hoagland is his uncle. He's one of the log pickers."

"Oh, that young Swedish lad you chum with? He's about your age, isn't he?"

"He's *just* my age," Jack returned.

"Yes, I know him," exclaimed Mr. Seymour, learning who he was. "I didn't know he was Axel's nephew. Jack," he went on, "run out and find Hoagland, will you? Tell him to come here; I want to see him. Hoagland is just the man," he explained to Niles, when Jack had gone. "He's one of our foremen and he was with the Hudson's Bay Company for years when a young man. He knows all about that country and he can tell us where to go and just what to take, and where to get guides and canoes and all that."

"You talk as though it were understood that I am going," Mr. Niles remarked with a quiet smile.

"Of course you're going!" returned Mr. Seymour. "You can't stay home after you've heard about that big moose, can you?"

Both were still laughing when Jack returned, bringing Axel Hoagland with him. Axel was a square man; he might have been hewn with an adze out of a pine log. His head was square; his cheeks were flat, woody slabs; his body was a right-angled chunk; his arms and legs suggested rough timber; his thumb joints stuck away from his wrists. His knuckles were knots and there was even an odor of pine about him to suggest that he had been whittled out. But for all his squareness, he was not what one could have called a "square-head." He was smart; one could see that at a glance. He looked at the two rich men with pale blue eyes that were afraid of no man; his jaws met together; the durable qualities of wood were in Axel Hoagland's character, plainly enough.

"Axel, this is Mr. Niles," began Mr. Seymour. Axel nodded his head and shook the extended hand of the slight city man. "Axel, we're going up into the woods this fall and we want to talk it over with you."

"That is, some of us think we are, Mr. Hoagland," put in Mr. Niles, smiling at his friend's enthusiasm just as Mr. Seymour had smiled at the boy's.

"We're going, right enough," insisted Mr. Seymour, with a shake of his head at his friend. "We were just talking about the English River country. What do you know about that region for moose, Axel?"

"It's good," said Axel as he nodded his head briefly.

"Plenty of moose up there?" went on Mr. Seymour, trying to draw him out. Axel was a man of few words.

"There are a good many up there; yes."

"Do they walk on you when you sleep?" asked Mr. Niles, with a sly look at his friend.

Axel saw that it was a joke between them, and paid no attention to the question.

"Do you know a better moose country?" demanded Seymour, determined to make him talk.

"Yes."

Seymour leaned back in his chair and ran his fingers through his hair.

"Where, man!" he exclaimed.

"Here," answered Axel, leaning over the map and pointing to the country above the west end of Lac Seul. "And up in there." He swept his square fingers over the map to the northward.

"That's pretty far," observed Mr. Seymour. "Is it hard to get to?"

"Yes," Axel replied. "But this isn't." He laid a finger on the line that indicated the English River.

"That's good enough, is it?" Mr. Seymour went on. "Plenty of moose there?"

"You can find moose there," Axel replied.

"How do we get there? How long would it take us to make the trip and have a week or two of good shooting?" It was Mr. Niles who asked the question. Seymour laughed and winked at him.

"Oh, I guess you're going, all right," he said.

Axel, taking a pencil from his pocket, began to explain the map. "You go to Kenora from Winnipeg on the Canadian Pacific. You can outfit in Winnipeg. That's best. You won't need to take anything from here but your guns and clothes. Kenora is where the Winnipeg River goes out of the Lake of the Woods. You can

take canoes there to White Dog. It's eighty-five miles down the river. At White Dog you can get a Hudson's Bay canoe and provisions. From there it is ninety miles up the English River to Lac Seul. It's good hunting all the last half of the river. If you want to keep on to Lac Seul it is ninety miles, all the way. You can follow up Lac Seul to the Hudson's Bay post on it if you want to get anything, or if you get into trouble. That's eighty-five miles further up the lake."

"It's all upstream on English River, isn't it?" asked Niles, studying the map.

"On English, yes; on the Winnipeg, no. When you want to come back, you can keep on down the English into the Winnipeg and down that to Lac du Bonnet, and cross over from there to the railroad, coming out at Molson. There's a telephone from Lac du Bonnet to Molson; you could get word home from there."

"Would that be the quickest way home?" asked Mr. Niles.

"The easiest," replied Axel.

"It'll be pretty cold up there, won't it? When does the moose season open?" Mr. Niles was becoming interested. Mr. Seymour looked at him

and grinned, leaving him in the hands of Hoagland.

"The season opens October fifteenth."

"And when does the snow come?"

"Any time after that."

"And when do the rivers freeze?"

"Any time after that; November first. But you can usually get through until November fifteenth or twentieth; sometimes until the last of the month. It depends on the season and the water."

"And when could we get back?" went on Mr. Niles. "I must be in Winnipeg by November first." He did not know when he had made up his mind to go, but he would not have stayed home now for all the lumber in the world.

"You'll have to be in Winnipeg by the tenth of October. That'll give you two weeks from the time you get into the moose country until you reach Lac du Bonnet. You'll be traveling part o' the time and camping part o' the time."

"What'll we have to take with us?" Mr. Niles made no pretenses now.

"Oh, you're going, are you?" joked Mr. Seymour with a loud laugh.

"You bet I'm going!" returned the man from Chicago. "What'll we need, Hoagland?"

"Blankets you can get at Kenora," Hoagland answered. "Tents and camping outfit, too. All you'll need is clothes and guns. Take heavy woolen underwear and a lighter suit. You'll probably get wet in the canoes. Take a sweater. Wear nothing but woolens. Canvas suits are too noisy. Don't forget a waterproof match box."

"How about our feet, Axel?" Mr. Seymour asked. "Do we want rubber boots?"

"They're bad," Axel said, shaking his head. "The best thing for the feet are fawn-skin moccasins. I'll make you a couple pairs. You put these next your feet. Then you put two pairs of knitted sox on over them, with moose-hide moccasins over all, and your feet'll never get sore."

"What kind of a tent do we want?"

"Two lean-tos," answered the old Hudson's Bay man. "You can build the fire between them."

"I'll take along my pneumatic bed," said Mr. Niles, his eyes lighting with enthusiasm over the prospect of days and nights in the woods.

"We can get all our grub at Kenora?" Mr. Seymour asked.

"There and at White Dog."

"What sort of country is it?" asked Mr. Niles.

"All kinds. You'll have hills and woods and some of the barrens. You'll find firewood if you're careful to pick out your camping place."

"What's the best way to get a moose up there, Hoagland?" Mr. Niles went on. "Do you call, or stalk?"

"Creep 'em, mostly. You can call, if you care to. That means making the cry of the cow so that the bull moose will come up."

"How about guides?" put in Mr. Seymour.

"You can get guides at Kenora, but it'll be better to wait till you get to White Dog. You will find better ones there."

"Indians?" asked Mr. Niles.

Axel Hoagland scowled and shook his head.

"You can't trust them," he answered. "You must have guides but try to get Hudson's Bay men."

"Wish you could go with us, Axel," said Mr. Seymour thoughtfully.

Axel nodded his head, wishing that he could. But he knew he could not be spared from the mill and so made no answer.

"You know all that country pretty well, don't you?" said Mr. Niles in the pause that followed.

"I've lived there," replied Hoagland.

"By the way, Axel," broke in Mr. Seymour with a sly look at Jack. "Did you ever happen to see a giant moose up in those parts?" Mr. Niles smiled at the question.

"I never saw him," responded Axel soberly.

The way he said it erased the smile from the lips of Mr. Niles and the sly look from the eyes of his friend.

"Did you ever hear of him?" asked Mr. Seymour quickly.

"Yes."

Both men sat up sharply in their chairs.

"Jan has seen him!" cried Jack Seymour excitedly.

The two men looked from Axel to the boy and then at each other. Axel glanced toward Jack and nodded an affirmation.

"Jack, the laugh is on us," said Mr. Niles. "Tell us about it, Mr. Hoagland, can you?"

"There isn't much to tell," Hoagland replied. "There's been a large moose up there a long time. The Indians tell about him. Every once in

a while somebody sees him, but they never get a shot at him. Selous tried two seasons."

Selous! One of the greatest hunters of big game of all time! Had he been up there looking for Jack's Giant Moose? Then there must be something to the yarns. The two men grew as excited as Jack.

"Tell us about him," they urged Axel.

"There isn't much to tell," Axel repeated.

"Where is he?"

"On the English. He ranges from there to the country north of Lac Seul."

"How big is he?"

"Some say two thousand pounds. That's mighty big. Maybe fifteen hundred."

"He must have a fine spread of antlers!" exclaimed Niles with a glance at Mr. Seymour. "Look fine in your office, Seymour."

"We'll get him!" cried Mr. Seymour, thumping his fist on the desk. "We'll get him, Niles, as true as pine lumber!"

Jack Seymour could stand it no longer. His eyes had been hanging out of his head from the moment he returned to the office with Hoagland, and when the Hudson's Bay man admitted the

existence of the legendary moose he was ready to burst.

"Oh, dad!" he cried, catching his father by the sleeve; "take me along with you, won't you?"

The father looked at the boy regretfully. He had always found it hard to deny him anything but he felt that this would be too much of a trip for the lad. They had been out camping more than once and Jack already had dropped his deer. But an expedition into the wilds of Canada was another thing.

"No, my boy," he said, laying his huge hand on Jack's shoulder, "I guess you'll have to stay home this time."

Jack said nothing, for he knew his father's word was final. But he turned and left the office with a heavy heart. It is not certain that there was not a bit of a tear trying to break between the lids of his eyes as he walked out of the building and across the yard to the street car. If he had known that his father's refusal to take him was to be the means of saving the lives of both Mr. Seymour and Mr. Niles, he would not have felt so badly about it.

## CHAPTER II

### ON THE EDGE OF THE WILDERNESS

Jan Jaeger lived with Axel Hoagland, his bachelor uncle. His mother died when he was seven years old and his father had wandered off to sea. From the time of the death of his mother Jan had lived with Axel, who had been mother and father and brother to him. They lived in a little cabin not far from the mill where Jan did the cooking and kept house.

One evening, several weeks later, Jack Seymour wandered to the cabin to see Jan and talk over the hunting trip on which Mr. Seymour and Mr. Niles had recently started. Jack had been very lonely since his father left and it fitted his humor this day to go to see Jan, who was full of the lore of the forests and streams.

Axel was busy checking up in the mill office. The two boys sat on the edge of a bunk in the cabin looking at Axel's rifle. It was a 45-70 Winchester; a savagely graceful weapon with a dignified, businesslike air about it. The two were

admiring it closely — Jan showing its fine points to Jack. He had been careful to make sure that there were no cartridges in the magazine. Jack stood up, swung the gun to his shoulder, drew a bead on the lamp and snapped the trigger to see how it balanced.

"It's a little too heavy for me offhand," he said. "I could shoot better with my little 30-30."

"Lot o' good your 30-30 would do you against a moose," observed Jan, taking the gun and balancing it in his turn. Jan's mill work made him stouter than Jack.

"I'll bet it would!" retorted Jack sharply, ready to defend his weapon against all comers.

"What! A 30-30 kill a moose?" Jan almost sneered at the idea.

"You could kill an elephant with a 30-30 if you hit him in the right place!" exclaimed Jack.

"Just the same, if I saw the Giant Moose a hundred yards from me I'd like to have Uncle Axe's gun handy. You could have your 30-30 if you wanted it." Jan rejoined.

Jack, seeing Jan peaceably inclined, came down from his high horse.

"But what if you were five hundred yards

away? " Jack suggested in a more amiable tone. " Wouldn't you like to have my 30-30 then, with a soft-nosed bullet? "

" Yes," conceded Jan, " but in the wilds you don't often have to shoot more than a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards. It ain't like the open country in the Rockies, where you have to carry from one ridge to another. Wonder where they are to-day," he concluded, changing the subject.

" Let's see. This is the seventeenth, isn't it? " mused Jack. " I got a letter this noon. I brought it to show you. They ought to be in their permanent camp this evening." He brought out a fat letter and handed it to Jan.

Jan looked it over on the outside, read the postmark: " White Dog, Province of Ontario, Dominion of Canada, October 14, 1911," drew the letter out slowly, as one who was saving himself for a great treat, spread it open on his knees and leaned over it to puzzle out the handwriting of Mr. Seymour. This is what he read:

" My dear Jack: — Well, here we are at the beginning of our real trip. We have been through enough already to make us think it is a long way

back home. I'll tell you, lad, I've been glad a dozen times a day that I did not bring you along. We have had some pretty hard going already, and we are just beginning.

"Mr. Niles met me at Winnipeg on the 10th. His eyes shone like yours when we start out for trout or snipe. He was all togged out: new hunting suit, new shoes laced to the knee, a gold compass on a chain, sealskin gloves and I don't know what else. I tried to get him to give up his new suit for an old woolen one but he wouldn't. And he wouldn't put on those moccasin arrangements Axel fixed up for us, but stuck to his new shoes. He is beginning to be sorry already. They are not broken in yet and are likely to give him trouble.

"But I am going too fast. We had a day at Winnipeg and decided to outfit there. We had bedding and tents, but Niles saw some things he liked, and bought them. He doesn't care how much money he spends. Well, there is plenty more where that comes from, so nobody has to worry about that. One of the things he bought was a rubber blanket six feet long. I don't know what he expects to do with it. He brought along

his air mattress and when he saw I hadn't one he gave it to me and bought another. I could not stop him.

" When it came to laying in the provisions we nearly had a row. Axel had made out a list of things we would need. He told us to take, for each man, per day: two pounds of flour (or a pound and a half of sea biscuits), one pound of fat mess pork, two ounces of sugar, half an ounce of tea, two ounces of peas or barley for stew, half an ounce of carbonate of soda and half an ounce of salt.

" When I showed the list to Niles he snorted. ' Where's the coffee? ' he wanted to know. I told him coffee wasn't in it with tea for the woods and he let out a vigorous protest. ' What? ' he yelled ' Coffee not as good as tea? Where do you think you're going, man? A church social? ' We had it back and forth for a while but finally I gave in and let him buy coffee instead of tea. He bought enough to last us half a year.

" When we got to the fat pork he turned up his nose and demanded bacon. I told him Axel had advised pork and that he probably knew what he was talking about as he had lived

up here for years. But Niles wouldn't listen to it. 'I'd starve to death before I could eat fat pork,' he insisted. So we have bacon instead of pork.

"He stood for the flour but he had another fit over the peas. Beans he was willing to take but you would have thought peas were his lifelong enemy. I was beginning to get put out over the way he had messed up Axel's bill-of-fare and I began to pitch in. We squabbled about peas until finally he said: 'Well, you can have your peas, but I'll take some beans.' Then in my mind I saw the two of us sitting under our two lean-tos, one eating peas and the other beans. I began to laugh.

"'What you laughing at?' he asked. I told him, and he began to laugh, too. We didn't take any peas, in the end. He's an old hand at camping but he always has more conveniences than we are going to have this time, and he could not understand how hard it will be to get our truck into camp. He bought canned goods, chocolate, condensed milk, crackers, some French bread he found in an old bake-shop and what not.

"Well, when we had our things piled up you

would have thought we would need a freight car for them, but we got an old half-breed to pack them and he got them very nicely into a couple of boxes.

" We got to Kenora, on Lake of the Woods, at two o'clock. We spent that afternoon and the next morning looking for guides. I wanted to wait until we got to White Dog, but he wouldn't have it that way. We remembered what Axel told us about not taking Indians and we tried to find some Frenchmen or Scotchmen. We had heard of a Scotch half-breed we might be able to get, but Niles wouldn't wait. ' I didn't come up here to loaf around a railway junction looking for half-breeds.' I was a little bit surprised at Niles but he has had a lot of business worries lately and I didn't pay much attention to his bad humor.

" Well, after we had been in Kenora twenty-four hours we decided to take a couple of Indians who had been tagging us around. Nobody knew much about them, but they seem to know their business and up here at White Dog no one has anything to say against them. They belong to a tribe that lives on the shores of Lac Seul. They

surely know the country and I guess we'll make it all right with them. One of the Indians calls himself Pok-au-mok, and the other Frère Kek, but I call them Pock-mark and Freckles for short. The names are a little confusing, because the one we call Freckles has had small pox and the other hasn't.

"We started out late that afternoon down the Winnipeg River, traveling in two light canoes, Niles and Pock-mark in one and Freckles and myself in the other. I tell you, it was pretty fine, floating down the river that afternoon. We had to make camp early because the days are getting short, but before we landed I saw two deer, and the next day I saw six. The deer season doesn't open until November first, so we didn't do any shooting.

"I won't forget in a hurry our first night here in the open. It was as cold as mid-winter seems at home but we were snug in our blankets. The Indians kept up a fire between the tents so that we did not suffer. But, in the morning, I thought my nose was gone. It was so cold I could not feel it. I asked Freckles if it was frozen but as he didn't answer me, I made up my mind it wasn't as bad as it felt.

"We leave here before daylight to-morrow morning to go up the English River. We have engaged a large Hudson's Bay Company canoe that will hold all of us, and the guides are busy to-night getting it ready. We shall probably go about halfway to Lac Seul, ninety miles up the river, and will be in the wilderness not more than two weeks at the outside. Mr. Niles must get back to Chicago before the sixth of November and he wants to spend a few days in Minneapolis on the way down. We aim to reach Lac du Bonnet on the return by the first of November at the latest. This means we are going down the English and the Winnipeg directly to Lac du Bonnet as we planned before we left home. There is a telephone from Lac du Bonnet to Molson, on the C. P. R., so you can expect to have a wire by the first of the month. That will be the first word you get, though, because to-morrow we strike into the wilderness.

"Our guides are all right, I guess. Freckles says that he has heard about your Giant Moose, and Pock-Mark says that he saw him once, so that is comforting. Somebody here told us the two Indians were all right if we kept whiskey away from

them. We have only enough whiskey for medicine, so I guess we'll have no trouble with them on that point.

"Well, this is good-bye. I write to you because I know there is a lot in it that the mother will not be interested in. Give her a kiss for me and take good care of her.

"If we don't get the Giant Moose this trip, Jack, I'll bring you up here next fall and we'll take him back with us sure. We'll take Jan and Axel and then we won't have to worry about Indian guides."

Jack watched Jan through the perusal of the letter.

"What d'you think about those Indians, Jan?" he asked when the latter handed the letter back to him.

Jan shook his head and, like his uncle, he said nothing when there was nothing to say.

"They won't get lost, will they?" Jack went on, worried by his father's mention of the Indians and by Jan's silence.

"The rivers always run in the same direction in Canada," Jan said at last. He ventured no closer guess as to what might happen to the two hunters with the Indian guides.

## CHAPTER III

### AXEL HOAGLAND MAKES AN ANNOUNCEMENT

Jack Seymour was an excited boy on the morning of November first. He had been half expecting a telegram from Molson, Canada, for two or three days, thinking perhaps his father and Mr. Niles might have come out of the wilderness sooner than they had planned. Now, on the first, he was certain he would hear whether they had got the Giant Moose. Sometimes he hoped they had and then again he hoped they had not; for if they had failed it meant a trip for him next year.

He was up and dressed before it was fairly light and at the telegraph office before breakfast. He was not disappointed to learn that nothing had come. But when he went back at nine on his way to school, and nothing had come, he grew impatient. By noon, finding nothing had arrived, he began to grow nervous. His mother also was beginning to be a bit restless; she had a worried look all through luncheon.

That afternoon, when nothing had come, Jack took his troubles to Jan Jaeger.

"What do you suppose has happened to them?" he asked. "You don't suppose those Indians did anything to them, do you?"

"Nothing has happened to them," Jan answered. "The worst about those Indians is that one of them is no good. Uncle Axel knows Frère Kek. He's got enough white blood to make him worthless, but he ain't vicious and it ain't likely the other is."

"You never told me that Axel knew Freckles!" exclaimed Jack in surprise.

"What was the use?" answered Jan and Jack felt that he had been answered.

"Well, then, why don't we hear from them?" young Seymour went on. "We were to hear today."

"The day ain't over yet," rejoined Jan.

This brought sudden comfort to Jack, leaving him nothing but impatience. His worry was removed and he went back to his mother at dinner time fortified with new courage.

Mrs. Seymour and Jack sat up late that night. Each pretended some excuse. They tried to talk

of many things, but couldn't. Every step on the pavement, every creak of the door before the wind, every tinkle of the telephone, broke off their talk and neither could resume it, because neither could ever remember what he had been talking about. They went to bed at last, promising themselves they would hear in the morning.

"He might send a night letter," Jack explained to his mother and she gladly accepted the suggestion.

The next day came and went and brought no telegram. Jack and his mother waited another day and another, trusting there had been some little delay on the way down the river or that the message had failed to come through. Jack, reading again and again the letter his father had sent from White Dog, told his mother the hunters might have staid in the wilderness longer than they expected, because Mr. Niles did not really have to get back to Chicago until the sixth of November and he would still have time to do that, by cutting out his stop in Minneapolis.

But, when the fourth of November came without any word, their anxiety grew into real alarm. Mr. Niles would not deliberately stay in the woods

so long that he would fail to get back to Chicago on the sixth. Mother and son were now certain something had happened. Jack had talked things over with Axel daily without much satisfaction, for Hoagland declined to make any guesses. But on this day, Jack went to him with concern that could no longer be controlled. Hoagland was the natural one to go to under the circumstances. He knew the country and would know best what to do if anything was wrong.

"Axel," Jack began, "mother and I are awfully worried. We know father and Mr. Niles ought to be out of the wilderness by this time. Mr. Niles has got to be home day after to-morrow. They wouldn't stay up there unless something had happened to keep them. What do you think has happened? What do you think we ought to do about it?"

Axel had not had time to begin a reply when the office door flew open and two well-dressed strangers entered.

"Is this Mr. Seymour's office?" one of them asked.

"Yes, sir," Jack replied.

"Have you heard from Mr. Seymour?" the

man went on. "This is Mr. Niles, son of the gentleman who went with Mr. Seymour, and I am Mr. Carpenter, one of his partners. We have failed to get into communication with him and have come to see if you can give us any information."

"We haven't heard a word sir, since I got a letter from father written at White Dog, before they went into the wilderness," Jack answered. "We're worried, too. We're just talking it over. This is Axel Hoagland. He is an old Hudson's Bay man and he knows that country."

Both men turned to Hoagland, who set his feet squarely on the floor and began to talk, slowly and cautiously.

"They had two Indian guides," he said. "One was no good. I know him; he was no good. He was lazy and wouldn't work unless you gave him whiskey. Then he would only get drunk. The other I don't know but they always train together.

"The Indians wouldn't do anything worse than rob them and run off. But that might be bad enough. Mr. Seymour wouldn't get lost; they'd find a river and follow it to White Dog; but they

might get hungry. Perhaps the Indians took their guns. But I don't think they'd dare do that. They'd more likely steal the canoe. That'd be bad. It'd be hard for two men to carry what they needed without a canoe — two men not used to it," he qualified.

Jack thought of the equipment and supplies Mr. Niles had loaded the expedition with, and for a moment his heart sank.

"One thing's sure," Axel went on. "The two men have not come down the English River by way of White Dog."

"How do you know that?" asked Jack quickly, glad of anything positive.

"I've telegraphed to White Dog and to Lac du Bonnet and Kenora. Nothing has been heard of them at any of these places. They may have tried to strike south for the C. P. R. and have met trouble. They may have gone on to Lac Seul. One thing is likely; they are in trouble. There's been three inches of snow at Kenora and the thermometer has been to zero in Winnipeg. Winter is early this season and the two men must be brought out soon if they are going to be brought out at all. Jack, here, is a brave young

man," Axel went on, grasping the boy's shoulder with a gesture of confidence and regard, " and he might just as well know this now as later. His father is in danger."

Jack braced himself and looked each man of the company between the eyes to get his strength together. Niles' son, who was a year or two older than young Seymour, did not do so well. A tear crept into his eyes, and his lips trembled. Perhaps that was because he did not have a man like Axel Hoagland to say that he was brave and put a paw on his shoulder.

" What are we going to do about it? " asked Mr. Carpenter with the brisk air of a man of business.

" Jan and I are going up to look for them," Axel answered.

Jack looked at him in astonishment.

" I've made up my mind," Axel went on.

" You'll make up a party? " suggested Mr. Carpenter.

" We'll get guides at White Dog," Axel answered.

" But you'll have a party? " Carpenter per-

sisted. He would have sent an army to find the two men.

"That's a party," Axel returned.

"Who is Jan?" Mr. Carpenter went on, not at all satisfied. The rescue party did not come up to his ideas about such things, derived from reading of polar relief expeditions, probably.

"Jan is my nephew," Axel explained.

"What are your plans?" asked the business man, used to carrying off any conversation in which he might become involved.

"We'll trail them with guides till we find them or learn what's happened to 'em."

"Meanwhile, can nothing be done? Has nothing been done?" Mr. Carpenter looked at Axel as if he would have it understood whom he meant to charge with negligence. Axel had too free and easy a way to please Mr. Carpenter, who was in the habit of being at the head of things.

"All the police in that part of Ontario are looking for the men, and have been since the second," Axel answered quietly.

Carpenter went off on a new track.

"You will need money," he said.

"The J. W. Seymour Mill and Lumber Company has enough to see us through," said Axel.

"We'll contribute to the fund," Mr. Carpenter declared. "We'll pay you well if you find them, Hoagland."

"If I was goin' to do this for money, I wouldn't do it at all," Hoagland said, at once. "I'm goin' to find Mr. Seymour," he went on, his voice not varying. "That's what takes me into the woods at this time of the year. If I find him and find your man with him, that'll be enough."

The boy had been swept off his feet by the glibness of Mr. Carpenter and by his astonishment over the discovery of what Axel had been doing in the matter. But he soon recovered himself.

"When are you going, Axel?" he asked.

"To-morrow."

"I'll go with you," announced Jack.

"All right." Axel nodded his head, for he knew the boy.

"I think I'll go, too," volunteered young Niles moving forward.

Axel looked him up and down for a space.

"You'd better not," he said.

That was enough. Young Niles had not another word to offer. There was more talk on the part of Mr. Carpenter, to which Axel finally put a stop by marching out of the office with Jack to make final preparations for the expedition of rescue.

Thirty-six hours later Axel, Jan, and Jack were on the train bound for Winnipeg.

## CHAPTER IV

### SANDY MCNICOLLS AND PIERRE TACHE

Jack Seymour had always had a high opinion of Axel Hoagland but he had never fully realized what a man he was until they started on the rescue trip to the Canadian wilds. The way in which Hoagland had gone ahead without consulting anyone, to get trace of the missing men, and the way in which he decided to go after them before anyone suggested it, opened Jack's eyes to the real character of his father's employee. He had not been two hours on the train with Axel before he knew that the hunt for his father could not be in better hands, and he was ready to leave every detail to the Hudson's Bay man.

Even Mr. Carpenter had come to the conclusion, before he returned to Chicago, that that Hoagland knew what he was about. He and young Niles had remained at Menominee twenty-four hours to see them off, and they had insisted upon supplying Hoagland with money in addition to what he was taking from the bank.

Mrs. Seymour had been very reluctant at first to let Jack go. It was not until Axel Hoagland told her that the boy could be of real service that she consented to his accompanying the party.

Jack took his 30-30 and a supply of ammunition; soft-nosed bullets and others, for a variety of game. The purpose of the expedition was distinctly not to hunt, but the gun would bring food into camp. In the pride of going forth into the wilderness in possession of his beloved gun, Jack almost forgot at times the tragic nature of the errand that was taking him.

Axel did not stop at Winnipeg to outfit, knowing he could get what he wanted at White Dog. There was time enough, however, to permit him to make inquiries by phone at Lac du Bonnet and Kenora to see whether the missing hunters had returned. Nothing had been heard from them.

There was a wire at Kenora from Menominee saying that no news had reached home. While Axel and Jan were getting a canoe and loading it Jack called up Lac du Bonnet again to make sure that the objects of their search had not yet appeared.

They started from Kenora two hours after

their arrival, in one canoe. The load was heavy but Axel and Jan were old hands with the paddles and made the boat jump down stream. There was a fair current in the Winnipeg and they covered a good stretch before five o'clock when the coming of night drove them ashore.

The first night was a bitter one. There was a nip in the air and they had no tents to shelter them, having left the procuring of these until they arrived at White Dog. Jan and Axel kept a fire going all night but Jack, although wrapped in his blankets, shivered until the sun rose. Perhaps it was not so much the weather as it was his state of mind, for he could not get his thoughts off his father. He thought of him as lost and needing help somewhere in the wilderness whose edge he was just entering; he thought of him as lying out that very night under the same stars, pinched by the same cold, and suffering he knew not what in body and mind.

They made a quick passage to White Dog, covering the remainder of the forty miles the second day. It was hard work and the pace would not have done at all for a steady journey but Axel was anxious to get to the post and look for guides.

He knew he would have to put in at least a day there outfitting, and that would give them a chance to rest.

There were several guides Axel had in mind. He had sent word ahead the day before the consultation in the mill office in Menominee. One in particular he desired to get hold of if he could. This was Sandy McNicolls, a Scotch Canadian, in Axel's opinion, the best woodsman in the country.

McNicolls was at White Dog when they arrived. They found him at the H. B. store, smoking his pipe and blinking at the great iron stove that heated the room. Like Axel himself and a great many who live in the solitudes, he was a man of few words. He had got Axel's message and was ready to go with the party.

"We maun find them," was all he would venture in response to Jack's anxious inquiries as to the probable fate of his father and Mr. Niles.

There was much gossip in the store about the missing men. Everyone had a theory excepting those whose opinions might have been of some value. If Jack had been permitted to listen to all the explanations that were offered he would have been carried more than once from the de-

spair of hopelessness to the height of joy, and back again, so varied were the conjectures.

On one thing all seemed to be agreed. Mr. Seymour and Mr. Niles had made a bad selection of guides. Frère Kek was notoriously worthless. The two hunters had been strongly advised against taking him, but the smaller of the strangers, as Mr. Niles was described, was so impatient to get away that they had kept the fellow. He was shiftless and trifling and although he knew the country he had no sense of responsibility. A white man wanting to be guided through the wilderness meant to him nothing more than so many prospective drinks of whiskey.

Concerning the other Indian, Pok-au-mok, less was known. He seldom appeared at White Dog, doing most of his trading at Lac Seul. He had never been known to act as guide before. He knew the country, of course, and had skill with moose but how he would behave under the responsibility of his job no one could guess. Axel did not say much when he heard about the Indians, but from the way he shook his head, Jack made up his mind that he did not like the news.

On top of all they had heard about these In-

dians, three others came to Axel that night and offered their services, but Hoagland would have nothing to do with them. He knew one of them and another was well recommended to him but he had made up his mind to take no one but a white man.

And there was no white man in sight. All the next day, while Jan and McNicolls were getting together the outfit, Axel searched and made inquiries. The best he could do was a French and Cree half-breed, Pierre Tache, who would have passed for an Indian sooner than a half-breed. Tache had the high cheek bones and the square shoulders of the Crees, and the coarse black hair and thick lips. His eyes, too, half sunken under his brows, were the eyes of an Indian. Axel decided, after a look at him, that he would not take him if he could do better, in spite of the fact that McNicolls gave Tache a good reputation. Axel had an aversion for Indian blood that was hard to overcome.

They were ready to start the next morning but Axel delayed departure, hoping for a white guide to share the duties of Sandy McNicolls. He was

in hope that some of the old Hudson's Bay men with whom he had worked might come into White Dog. He wanted some one on whom he could depend. It was not a little thing to follow two men through the untracked wilds of Canada in the beginning of winter.

All that day he waited but, on the night of the the second day, which was November tenth, he yielded to the pleadings of Jack and gave in and hired Pierre Tache. Axel was not the man to stand for dictation from many sources but he forgave and indulged the boy, knowing what he was passing through. Nor did he want to risk further delay.

The morning of the eleventh of November broke dull and sombre. There was a snarl in the air; a murky north wind sulked over the barrens. Now and then there was a whisk of snow in the sky. The thermometer had been falling for the last two days; all the old timers were predicting an early and severe winter and this seemed to be the skirmish line of Jack Frost's general advance.

The two canoes, laden and ready for the start, were on the shore of the river. The little group

of voyagers gathered about them in the first dusk of the morning. They spoke sparingly. Jack was shivering and shaking, more from excitement and nervousness than the cold, for he was bundled to the chin in heavy clothes and a thick sweater. He had on the moccasins that Axel had made; fawn skin next the foot, two thicknesses of socks outside that and the whole covered with a moose-skin moccasin that tied about the ankle.

Others came down to the bank of the river to see them off. The expedition had aroused the curiosity of the post, for usually there was little enough to interest it. The men who had snugged down in White Dog for the coming winter did not envy the five who were setting out on that cold, bleak November morning for a voyage that would take them none knew whither.

Jack got in the middle of one of the canoes, Sandy McNicolls climbed into the bow, and Axel, shoving it off carefully to avoid scraping its bottom on the rough shore, clambered in over the stern. They took their paddles and without a word swung off into the black, twisting current where the English and the Winnipeg flowed together. The other canoe, carrying Jan, Pierre

and most of the provisions and outfit, followed immediately.

Jack's heart was thumping as the canoes threaded across the swirling stream and turned into English River. He thought of his father, who had passed that way in the happiness of a long-looked-for vacation not many days before. He could almost hear the shores echo now with his hearty laugh and his bantering cries to Mr. Niles, the slim city man who had acted like a spoiled boy over the start.

Somewhere up that river his father was now, wanting him. Somewhere he was in desperate need. They must find him, and they must find him soon. He was eleven days overdue already. He was off there in the wilderness; he had a voice and his son had ears, but there was no way by which the one might let the other know. The same sky bent above them in a short arc; the drops of water which bubbled past the speeding canoe might have been the very drops in which he had washed his face and hands two days before. How Jack wished they could tell him all they knew!

These were the reflections that crowded the

boy's mind that early November morning as the rescue party paddled its way up the waters of the English River into the wilderness that held his father.

## CHAPTER V

### JACK'S FIRST SHOT

Jack speedily settled down to the task before him. He made up his mind that these men must not be sorry they had brought him. He would not be the weak one of the party. He knew this was going to be no easy task when he looked at the four with whom he was traveling. The very atmosphere was charged with a feeling of efficiency. These men — for he had come to count Jan as a man — had an air about them of being ready for anything; of being equal to any emergency. They were men who could do things.

Jan Jaeger, kneeling in the bottom of the second canoe and paddling with Pierre Tache, filled Jack with inspiration. His lithe young shoulders, whip-corded with muscles by his work at the mill, rolled with the rhythm of his stroke as his paddle flashed through the water with steady, ceaseless swing. His blue, straightforward eyes were intent on the river ahead, watching for snags or floaters that might smash or tear the

frail birch of the canoe. He was so strong, so quiet, so businesslike that a lump of pride came into Jack's throat as he watched him, and he was glad Jan was his chum.

And Axel, sitting in the stern of the first canoe! What a brick he was! That square jaw of his! You would not see him shaken easily from anything he had set out to do. And those eyes under their straight brows, peering out above the flat, wooden cheeks! How soft they were for those he liked and how they could glint when he did not like! How they had glinted, for instance, when he heard about Pok-au-Mok and Frère Kek. Even Mr. Carpenter, if he could have seen them speeding up the river on that cold and dismal morning, must have been satisfied that this man would do all that could be done to recover the lost hunters of the Giant Moose. It was their plan to proceed at once at least halfway to Lac Seul and look for the permanent camp of the missing men.

"There will be no good in our stopping short of Forty Mile Point," explained Sandy. "They'll no be stoppin' this side o' there for the permanent camp."

Axel grunted endorsement of the opinion.

"But what will they be doing now in a permanent camp?" asked puzzled Jack. "If they were in there they'd get in their canoe and come out, wouldn't they?" Jack asked the question in a tone of complete respect for the wisdom of the two in the boat; he did not suggest that they did not know what they were talking about.

"We maun begin at the beginnin'," answered Sandy. "We maun find a startin' place."

"You will trace them from there, of course," he said, to show that he understood at once the wisdom and purpose of the plan.

"If they've left," returned the Scotchman.

"What do you mean? Do you think they might be there yet?"

"They maun be," said Sandy. "Sick or hurt or such."

"But they could put a sick man in the canoe and bring him down to White Dog," Jack suggested. Unconsciously his eyes were searching every bend in the river for possible sight of a canoe.

"Aye; but the canoe's gone," asserted Sandy.

"How do you know?"

"Because they wull be puttin' a sick man in it else and bringin' him doon," Sandy explained.

Jack had never before found Sandy in a humor to talk.

"What do you think has happened to the canoe?" he asked, making the most of his opportunity.

"Smashed or stolen," said Sandy simply.

Jack saw no open ground ahead in that direction.

"Do you think you'll find them at their permanent camp?" he urged.

"We maun first find the camp," returned Sandy.

"If you don't find it, what'll you do?" the boy continued.

"We'll look for it," answered Sandy. By which Jack knew that the permanent camp would be found, if it had ever been made.

"What do you really think has happened to them?" ventured Jack after a pause. He had never before mustered up courage to put the question so broadly.

Sandy shook his head. "Hoot, mon!" was all he said, in a tone meant to indicate that the answer was beyond his guessing.

At first Jack was inclined to feel that Sandy should at least have had some idea of what had happened to the missing men, some theory on which to base his search. But, as he thought it over, he remembered something he had read about a detective who said that was just the thing a man should not do if he wanted to unravel a mystery. He must get his facts first and fit his theory to them, instead of fitting his facts to a theory. He understood then that Sandy was waiting until he might see, before coming to conclusions, and he knew that in this the Scotchman was wise.

Nevertheless, he would have been glad indeed to have found some one who would discuss with him the probabilities of the case. The young mind is curious and impatient. Having no one who would indulge him in this desire, Jack was forced to content himself with his own conjectures. And these led him back and forth between hope and despair until he forced himself to think of something else.

Naturally enough, the thing he thought of was the Giant Moose. All he had heard about it so filled his fancy that he actually kept a close watch

on both banks of the river and would not have been greatly surprised to have seen the monster break cover at any moment.

"Did you ever see the Giant Moose?" he asked.

Sandy turned to cast a look over his shoulder at the questioner.

"What do ye know o' the Giant Moose?" he asked in turn.

"Jan Jager told me about it," Jack replied. "Father and Mr. Niles were going to try to get him."

"You'd best ha' naught to do wi' that beastie!" exclaimed Sandy with more vigor than Jack had previously noticed in him.

"Why, what's the matter with the Giant Moose?" the boy inquired, full of curiosity.

"He's a man-killer!" Sandy answered. "He's killed three, to my certain knowledge, and I mysel' ha' lost a friend to him."

"What does he do? How does he kill men?"

"With hoof and horn, lad, with hoof and horn. You maun not stop him with a bullet. He bears a charmed life and comes chargin' on despite o' all. Three men's blood he has on his antlers to my certain knowledge this very day."

What if his father and Mr. Niles had met the Giant Moose? What if they had failed to stop him and the huge beast had borne them both down in a charge and gored them? The idea took hold of Jack and he could not shake it off. "We've got to find the trail of the Giant Moose if we can't find the other," he told himself. "That'll lead us to father. Perhaps," he added to give himself courage, "one of them is only hurt and the other has to stay to take care of him. Perhaps they've killed the moose and are livin' on it till we come."

The leaden sky under which the party had started did not brighten with the day. At no time could the position of the sun be traced by the light it cast; the clouds were too thick and dense. Jack had on heavy underclothing, a thick woolen suit, a woolen shirt and a heavy sweater, but the chill of the wind crept to his flesh. He made up his mind that he would put on a paper vest at noon. If he was beginning to feel the cold already, before the river was frozen, what would he suffer when the winter came on, as it would before their search was finished?

By noon an occasional snow flurry was whisk-

ing across the steaming river. There was only enough to cover the ground with a dusty veil of white, but this blew into inch-deep drifts in front of the bushes, leaving the ground bare. Jack knew it would be hard to trace the missing men at best, but with snow on the ground he did not see how even Sandy and Axel could do it.

"It'll no be yet," said Sandy, casting a glance into the northern sky.

"It's more likely to freeze," returned Axel. The two men seemed to have a way of knowing what each was thinking about, however few their words might be.

Jack, who did not understand so well, asked what would not "be yet."

"The snaw," said Sandy.

"What can you do if it snows?" asked the boy, glad of the chance to ask the question that was bothering him.

"What do you mean by 'what'll we do?'"

"How can you track the missing men?"

Jack had gotten into a way of referring to his father and Mr. Niles as the "missing men," as though they were nothing to him but two individuals. It was one of the little things that helped him keep up his courage.

"Ask Axel," said Sandy, tired of talking.

Jack, resenting the snub, turned to his father's foreman.

"How can you do it, Axel?"

"The snow'll not make as much difference as you think," he explained. "If we can find some trace o' them before the snow comes, it'll not be so bad. If we can find where they've been and when they were there, we'll guess pretty well where they have gone. Men up in these woods, if they have guides, always do about the same things. There is nothing else they can do. If we can hit their trail twice we'll try to guess what they're up to."

Snow, then, did not seem to be such a tragedy, after all. From that time Jack rather enjoyed watching the little flurries of it whirl across the river and rattle against the bank. It added a variety to the monotony of the scenery. The river was broad, in some places widening out into the dimensions of a narrow lake. For the most part the banks were covered with trees and underbrush. Here and there the trees broke down into a stretch of bare country, with low-lying and marshy banks. These patches were called barrens.

Jack kept his thoughts busy by watching the river for sight of a canoe bringing his father and Mr. Niles, which he did not expect to see, and examining the banks of the river for game. Sandy had told him he might see something to shoot for their camp and he had his 30-30 handy.

It was nearly noon, when McNicolls, ceasing his stroke and with his paddle hanging in the water, fixed his gaze on the bank and said, without moving a muscle:

"There he is, lad. Ye maun let him have one for luck."

Jack, catching up his rifle, followed Sandy's gaze, expecting to see at least a deer. All he could find was a rabbit sitting at the bottom of a hummock in a little stretch of barrens.

"What is it?" the boy whispered, after he had searched the view for something to shoot at.

"The cony, lad," returned Sandy unsmiling.

"Shall I shoot it?"

"Ye maun, for a stew. I reckon ye canna hit it; 'tis a far bit away. An' mind ye take him in the head, noo, else you'll spoil him for meat."

Jack perceived two things. Sandy wanted to cheer him up by giving him a chance to shoot at

something and the Scotchman also wanted to learn how well he could shoot. The rabbit was more than eighty yards away. Its head against the hummock was a poor mark; the colors of the head and the foliage were too much alike. The boy threw a shell into the chamber, raised the gun and brought the sight in line on the dim object. The canoe was drifting slowly but not enough to interfere with the shot.

The 30-30 spit and the rabbit, eighty yards away, gave a little bound into the air and collapsed in a still tuft of fur.

"Now we maun go ashore and eat it if there is aught left o' it," smiled Sandy. He said nothing more until he went with Jack to pick up the rabbit. The bullet had drilled the little head from center to center.

"Well shot, lad!" said the Scotchman. "Well shot! 'Twould na do for the Giant Moose to fall in wi' you, lad!"

Which flattering remark gave Jack much to dream about as they sat about their lunch on the bank of the English River.

## CHAPTER VI

### SIGNS AND OMENS

They were off again after less than an hour's rest and the afternoon passed without event. Sandy and Axel talked now and then about the Hudson's Bay company and the men Axel had known before he went to the States. Jack found himself listening with an interest that drove everything else out of his mind. He still kept his eyes open for signs of a boat or travelers but he did this now as a matter of quickly formed habit, without always thinking about it.

They paddled until night was fairly upon them before Sandy turned the nose of his canoe in shore to make camp. The party did not unpack the tents for the night. It was not cold enough for that and both Sandy and Pierre said it was not going to snow, although to Jack the weather was more threatening than it had been during the day.

The boy gathered wood, brought water for the supper and spent the time until this was ready

in dragging all the large pieces of wood he could find, close to the fire. Sandy and Pierre made fun of him but he meant to have a rousing fire all night if he did have to work hard to get it.

More than once before the night was over he was glad he had gathered the wood. Pierre and Sandy were right about the snow; the clouds blew away entirely before midnight and the north wind whizzed across the river and through the camp. Jack had on all the clothes he had worn in the daytime, was wrapped in two blankets and buried in a canvas sleeping bag, but still he was cold. The guides seemed to think nothing of it. They lay under their blankets, their feet toward the wind, and slept as comfortably as Jack would have slept in his bed in Menominee.

Before morning the heaped fire had died to a bed of coals. Jack, awakened by the cold, would have been tempted to give his rifle to anyone who would have piled more wood on these, but he could not muster courage to crawl out of his sleeping bag and do it himself. The very thought of it sent shivers down his back. He lay trembling for an hour and then fell asleep again, to dream of ice, snow and moose.

When he awoke again the east was gray and pink and the camp was stirring. Jan was at work over the breakfast and Pierre and Sandy were fussing about the canoes. Through the dusk, Jack could just see Axel rolling up the bedding and blankets. Jan was on the point of routing Jack out with his toe when the lad saved him the trouble.

"Anything I can do?" the boy chattered as he hovered over the fire.

"We need more water," said Jan.

Jack picked up the pail and started for the river. It was still dark, his eyes were full of sleep and he was so cold that he could hardly think. He kneeled beside the river and reached out with the pail, keeping his eye on Sandy and Pierre meanwhile. The pail hit something hard and Jack looked around in astonishment. The river was covered with a coating of ice.

"The river's frozen!" he cried in surprise.

Sandy and Pierre paid no attention to him; they had known this for some time. Jack tried the ice, stepping on it with one foot. It held but creaked under his weight. He started to kick a hole to get at the water when he saw an open-

ing that had already been made. He filled the bucket and went back to the camp fire where Jan was busy with tea and pork. He wondered what they were going to do now, with the river frozen, but he had made up his mind not to ask any more questions out of curiosity.

They did not spend much time over the breakfast. Half an hour after Jack had stumbled down to the river for water all were standing about the canoes. It had grown lighter and Jack could see a steaming black stretch down the center of the river where the water was still open. It was only necessary to get the canoes into that water.

Everyone seemed to know what he was about. Jan and Pierre went out on the ice a little way to test it. It cracked and swayed beneath them but did not give way. The problem was, whether to drag the canoes over the ice or to break a way ahead of them. The first method was the quicker but there was more than one danger accompanying it. When the ice should finally give way, as it must on their approach to the center, the ragged edges might tear the birch bark, or the canoes might hang and overturn. Also, those who were dragging them might get a sousing.

Nevertheless, the first plan was adopted, because they were in a hurry. Sandy rigged up a pair of runners to put under the first canoe so that it would not be hurt by being dragged over the ice. He then went ahead, hauling at the bow, while Axel pushed behind. They held themselves ready to prevent any accident when the ice gave way. Pierre, Jan and Jack pulled on ropes rigged up and led out on each side. They were at some distance from the canoe so that the weight of the boat and the haulers would be distributed as much as possible.

All had proceeded very slowly for thirty or forty yards when Sandy, raising his hand as a signal, crawled into the canoe, took an ax and began to chop the thin ice in front. The ice had commenced to give way with him. It took twenty minutes to get to the open water with the first canoe but the launching was made without misfortune.

They were not so fortunate with the other one. Carrying it out on the same course that the first had followed, so that it might use the channel Sandy had cut, the ice, which had been strained, broke under the workers. The canoe veered,

pitched and would have gone over if Sandy, with his feet planted on the bottom of the river, had not twisted it straight by sheer strength of his back.

But that was not all. Jack, trying to scramble into it from his position on the ice, broke through at the side of the canoe and went into the icy water up to his waist. The cold was so painful that he could hardly move a leg to help himself out. The situation was not without danger, for more reasons than one. He had his hands on the edge of the canoe but he could not clamber in for fear of overturning it. Neither could he crawl back onto the ice, for as fast as he lifted a leg on it, the crumbling edges broke under him. At last, under directions from Axel, he broke a way to the stern of the canoe and was dragged in.

There was nothing for it but to sit in his wet clothes. Axel wrapped him in blankets and gave him a paddle as soon as they were in the stream, so that he might keep warm by exercise. The day was clear, with a sun, and the temperature slowly climbed toward the freezing point with no wind. Jack's wet clothing froze before it became dry

but he did not mind it much. The stiffness of it was more annoying than the cold. He laughed to himself as he thought what his mother would do to him if he should go home on a freezing day with his clothing wet to his waist. It would be bed in hot blankets and something hot to drink. He was of opinion just then that he would be willing to go to bed between warm blankets if it could have been arranged without interfering with what he had in hand.

That night they made Forty Mile Point. They could have gone farther but Sandy wanted to stop and look for traces of the party they were hunting. Deep water came to shore there, and there was no ice to cross. Jack's clothes were dry by the time they landed for the night. He and Jan set out to fetch wood, after the canoes had been dragged up on the beach and the bedding brought out. Axel and Sandy went scouting for some signs of Mr. Seymour and his friend, while Pierre Tache went to a little patch of grass that came down to the river out of the brush, to set rabbit snares.

"Great smoke, look at this!" cried Jan, in

a state of high excitement after they had been gathering fagots a little while.

Jack ran where his friend was stooping over something on the ground that held his wide-eyed attention.

"What?" asked Jack.

"Do you see that?" Jan exclaimed, pointing to the ground. He was shaking with excitement and Jack had never seen him so stirred.

Jan was tracing an outline on the ground with his finger and Jack finally made out on the hard earth an outline not unlike a cow's hoof, but much larger and with rounded lobes in the front of the track.

"What is it?" he asked, beginning to feel Jan's excitement.

"It's him!" Jan turned a startled face on Jack as he replied.

"Who?" Jack was puzzled; it was perfectly clear however that it was not the trail of a man.

"The Giant Moose!" exclaimed Jan. "Look at the size of that track! No moose but the Giant Moose could have made that."

Jack could feel his hair rising at the announcement. His breath drew short and he shook all over.

"Where is he?" he asked, not knowing what he was saying and unable for the moment to think.

"Must have been here four or five days ago," Jan answered. "It's an old track."

Jack's imagination ran back. He saw in his mind's eye the moment when that great monarch of the wilds stood there, with his massive shoulders rising high in the air and his huge antlers spread against the sky. The boy was filled with a new excitement. There had always been something about the thought of the Giant Moose that had stirred him. Now he felt as if he were beholding the animal's ghost.

His first impulse was to run back to the camp for his rifle. It was an absurd thing to think of doing but he was rattled. Jan was cooler. He called Jack back and set him to picking up dead wood.

Jack was to experience another sensation that evening. When he and Jan returned to camp with their last load of wood they found Sandy and Axel returned from their search for traces of the missing men. It was then full dusk. Sandy came around the fire to Jack.

"Did ye ever see this afore?" he asked, holding out a water-proof match box.

Jack took it and examined it in the light of the fire. His first look startled him.

"That's dad's!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Where'd you find it?"

"They camped a mile above here, then," declared Sandy.

"When?" gasped Jack.

"Not less'n a fortnight ago, nor more than a month. Three weeks, I should say."

"About three weeks," corroborated Axel, nodding his head.

"Were they still in the canoe?" asked Jan.

Both guides nodded their heads. Jack did not know whether to take courage from the news or to be despondent. He was certainly glad to know they were actually on the trail of his father, but it had been so long since they camped at that spot that many things could have happened in the meantime.

Before he fell asleep at last, tired in every bone, one thing struck into his mind. This was the fact that they had come upon traces of his father and of the Giant Moose almost within an

hour. In the half thoughts and half dreams that preceded his slumber, this fact grew in significance and took on a meaning that gave him a feeling that it was an omen. He believed that, in some way which he could not yet foresee, the Giant Moose was to be involved in the recovery and rescue of his father.

This fancy so occupied his mind that it never occurred to him that perhaps the loss of the match box might prove a serious thing for his father. If he had understood the importance of it, he would have had other things than omens to think about. He would not have been so glad to find that trace of his parent.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MIDNIGHT CANOE

Many times during the night Jack awoke. Each time he felt strangely impelled to get up and go to the camp where Axel and Sandy had found his father's match box. He had an unaccountable feeling that his father was there and that he could do something for him by going. At last he could stand it no longer. He slipped quietly out of his blankets and sleeping bag, pulled on his gloves and hat, picked up his rifle and started up along the river.

Before he had gone ten paces McNicolls hailed him and demanded to know where he was going. Jack explained that he was thirsty and was going to the river to get a drink. Sandy told him there was a pail of water in camp but Jack said he had knocked it over when he was looking for it; which, of course, was not true. It shows how strongly the feeling that he must go to the old camp had taken hold of him when he thought nothing of telling a fib by way of an excuse.

The night was not dark, as the sky was nearly free from clouds and there were plenty of stars to cast a sheen over the barrens and the river. Jack could see the general lay of the land quite clearly, and by looking closely he could make out rocks and bushes. He went down to the river bank toward the canoes for the purpose of further deceiving Sandy McNicolls. When he arrived there he was almost impelled to get into one of the canoes and make the trip that way. To confess the truth, he was not altogether pleased with the prospect of fumbling his way through a mile of forest at that time of the night. He was not really afraid but he felt a bit creepy at the prospect.

But he thought better of the canoe trip. It was too hard work to get the canoe into the water and he might damage the bottom of it in the attempt, especially as another thin film of ice was forming in close to the banks of the river. Pausing for a moment to make sure that he was not being followed — he was ashamed of the adventure but he would not give up the idea of going to his father's camp — he struck into a clump of bushes and began threading his way through them upstream.

He went as quietly as he could at first, but when he had gone so far that he thought he would not be heard, he took less pains to be still and advanced more rapidly. The result was a good deal of a racket in the night woods. Perhaps Jack had a purpose in the racket. He may have thought it just as well to give warning to any wild animals lurking in the way, that he was coming.

He knew nothing more of the location of his father's former camp than that it was a mile upstream. That was one of the reasons why it was foolish for him to go. But he thought the way to get there might be shown to him in time. He had already grown to be superstitious about it. There was something about the vast deserted wilds and the cold gray of the coming winter that was weird enough to make any boy superstitious.

The boy kept close to the river in the main, sometimes walking along the beach and sometimes cutting across necks of land. Again, rocks or thickets drove him inland for considerable distances. But he was never long away from the river, even if he had to go out of his way to

visit it and then retrace his steps. His eyes grew used to the faint light as he went on, and he began to feel quite at home in the night.

Now and then as he went along, some fancied noise would cause him to stop and listen. At such times his excitement would make the blood beat in his throat and he could feel the hair on his head bristle like a dog's. He was not afraid; he was only keyed up. He had been through much that day.

Jack was certain that he must have covered nearly the distance to the camp, and he was beginning to examine the ground more closely for signs of the old camp fire when he was again arrested by a new noise. This time there could be no mistake about it. There was the sound of gravel crunching underfoot, followed by a long, rasping sound that was more like that made by a canoe drawn across a beach than anything else he could think of at the time.

At the same moment when he heard these sounds he was aware of a faint red glow near the river, to his left. It was very dim and he would not have observed it until he had come closer if he had not been aroused by the noise.

But there could be no doubt that there was a dying camp fire a short distance ahead of him.

Jack's excitement increased. He was certain his father was by that camp fire. With no other thought he sprang into a run. How he passed through the brush and over the rocks without disaster he could not have told, but he ran as he had never run in his life.

In two minutes the camp fire was plainly visible. It was a tiny fire, such as the Indians build, and it had fallen into embers. The light from it was not enough to reveal the ground about it.

As Jack hurried to it he was aware of something moving at the river's edge. He peered intently through the gloom and made out a canoe, with one figure in it, just putting out from the shore. He ran to the brink of the river, hoping to get a better view of the canoe, but the man in it quickly pushed out into the stream and vanished.

"Father!" cried the boy, standing with his toes in the edge of the river. "Father!" There was no answer but the rolling echo of his call, sent back by the woods and waters.

"Father! This is Jack! Jack Seymour! Who is it? Father!"

No answer came from the darkly sweeping stream that came out of the mysterious darkness and whirled off into darkness again, bearing with it another mystery.

Certain that the man in the boat could not have been his father or Mr. Niles, Jack hurried back to the camp fire. He could see no one lying near it. He got down on his hands and knees and made a search behind every bush and small tree. He was not going to miss any chance of finding his father or evidences of his presence.

No one was there. He threw two or three dry sticks on the smouldering fire and stood beside it, staring into the opening circle of light made by the reviving flames.

"Father, father," he called, now softly.

He could not abandon the belief that he had been brought there that night to meet his father. Then a new noise sounded. Something was coming toward him. He heard a twig breaking close at hand and a shuffling in the grass. When he turned in the direction whence the sound came, a man suddenly emerged from the shadows of the bushes and came into the firelight where Jack stood awaiting him. In a moment he saw it was McNicolls.

"Lad, lad," exclaimed the Scotchman, reprovingly, "what'll ye be doin' here?"

There was something more important to tell Sandy than the reason for his being there.

"Some one's been campin' here to-night," he said quietly, for by this time he was calm. "I saw him escapin' in a canoe. One man in a large canoe."

"Hoot, mon!" cried Sandy. "Gi' me your gun."

Jack handed him the 30-30. Sandy pointed it in the air and fired. Waiting for a space of half a minute or more, he fired again. After a like pause, he fired three, four times, five times. Having done this, bidding Jack follow him, he turned toward their own camp and started back at a brisk trot.

It was all Jack could do to keep up with Sandy. He had no time to wonder why McNicolls had fired the gun, much less to ask. He knew, of course, that it was a signal to the men in the camp but what the Scotchman wanted them to do, and how they would know what he expected of them, was more than he could understand.

Jan was the only one left in camp when the two reached it. One of the canoes was gone.

"Did they follow?" asked Sandy of Jan.

"They were pretty slow in getting started," Jan explained by way of answer. "The canoe was full of provisions which we had to take out so she could go faster."

"Where have they gone?" asked Jack.

"After the canoe," said Jan.

"How did they know anything about the canoe?" Jack panted.

It occurred to Jan that there were things about it that might puzzle one who had not had much experience in the woods, and he took the trouble to explain. "We heard a shot," he said. "The first one awoke us. We missed you and McNicolls. Then we heard another. Pretty soon there were three more. We could tell it was a signal of some sort because they came regularly. Of course we could not tell what Sandy wanted us to do. 'Wait,' says Uncle Axel. 'We'll see what's to be done pretty soon.' He knew McNicolls was not the man to start an alarm unless we could do some good and if he knew we could do some good there would be some way for us

to find out what to do. We waited a little while and pretty soon heard a canoe on the river. Pierre heard it and so did Uncle Axel, after a while. I could not hear it at all. ' He wants us to get after that canoe,' " said Uncle Axel, " and we made a jump for the boat. By the time we got the canoe in the river the sound of the other canoe had gone out of hearing."

Sandy, who had been down on the river bank all this time, now came back.

" They'll no catch him, I'm thinkin'," he muttered to himself.

" Who was it? " asked Jack, feeling the time had come for the question.

" You're the one who saw him; how should I ken who he was? " snapped Sandy.

Jack had learned by this time that the Scotchman had a way of picking on others when his mind was troubled by problems he was solving. He knew the fellow meant nothing by it, so he turned his question over to Jan.

" Who was who? " Jan returned.

" The man in the canoe."

" If you'll tell me what you have seen, maybe I can tell you something you haven't seen," said Jan.

Jack described his experience at the old camp site, telling about the man who had leaped into the canoe when he approached, and made all haste to get away.

"Why, it's plain as day," said Jan. "He's one of the Indians who was guiding your father and Mr. Niles and he has stolen the canoe from them."

"We must find him!" cried Jack. "We've got to get hold o' him and find where they are now!"

"What do you think my uncle and the Frenchman are paddling about on the river now for, Jack?" laughed Jan. "For fun?"

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TRAIL OF THE LOST HUNTERS

Jack now understood the meaning of all that had happened since he discovered the man stealing away in the canoe. Sandy had guessed that the man must have been up to some mischief and had at once concluded that he was one of the Indians who had been guiding the men for whom the rescuers were looking. Therefore he signaled the others on the theory that if the canoe passed them they would hear it and would then know by his signals they were to give chase. Axel and Pierre interpreted the signals correctly and immediately set off to overtake the canoe, although they could not know why it was wanted.

There was no doubt in Jack's mind now, that the man who had jumped into the canoe and run away from him was one of the rascals in whose hands his father's life had been. He wished savagely that he had let the fellow have a bullet from his 30-30 through the leg. Nor was he so particular about its being the leg; as far as the

Indian was concerned Jack would have been quite as willing to have drilled his skull with a steel-jacket, only that this might have removed a source of information concerning the whereabouts of the two white men.

Jack lay in his blankets, living over the scene again and again, each time with a little more heroism for himself in it. He had the Indian on his knees begging for mercy a dozen times; he was wrestling with him, arm to arm, jaw to jaw, half the night. Many were the death clutches from which he broke, and many were the wrestling tricks he played on the unsuspecting savage. Passing into a thin sleep at last he continued in his dreams to carry on conflicts with the red man, in the course of one of which he fell upon Jan, blankets, sleeping bag and all. The encounter might have resulted in a sorry mess of bedding if Sandy, awakened by the noise, had not brought Jack out of his nightmare with a thwack across the legs with a pack-strap.

It was within an hour of daybreak when they awoke, and all got up without loitering. The canoe had not come back from the pursuit and Jack was in a state of excitement over this fact.

He drew a dozen different conclusions from it but did not attempt to extract any from Sandy. And he had no chance to discuss the matter with Jan because the Scotchman was always within earshot.

The three packed up and loaded the second canoe after breakfast and then waited for the return of the pursuers. An hour passed by, and still came no word from the absentees. Sandy and Jan remained in stolid patience, but for Jack this was impossible. The boy wandered up and down the shore anxiously, searching the down-river reach for some sign of a canoe, and the seeming indifference of the others only served to render him the more impatient. Finally he caught a gesture from Sandy and hurried to the other two.

"In wi' ye," ordered the Scotchman, pointing to the canoe, which Jack now saw had been unloaded save for some provisions.

"Goin' after 'em?" cried Jack in excitement as he took up a paddle.

"Might as well," replied Jan. "There's no tellin' what's wrong."

"Think he's one o' the guides?"

"Can't tell, lad," replied Sandy from the stern. "Ye'd best keep on paddlin' steady an' save yer wind gin ye need it worse." And with this pointed hint Jack settled down to work.

For half an hour they paddled down stream without speaking a word. A sharp watch was kept, but no canoe came in sight and no sign of life was seen on either bank of the river. Suddenly both Jan and Jack turned at a sharp exclamation from Sandy.

"Jan! Did they take their guns?"

"Why, no!" Jan stared back in dismay. "Guess they forgot all about 'em or else thought they wouldn't need 'em. Why?"

"No tellin', lad." Sandy shook his head as he searched the river. "It maun ha' slipped my mind. But they'll no catch the skunk wi' oot guns, I'm thinkin'."

"Then it's lucky we brought ours," cried Jack. "Do you think there'll be a scrap?"

"No chance o' that," laughed Jan, "while the fellow can run away. It's queer we don't come on some trace of them, however. They've been gone pretty nearly six hours by now."

"We're cert'nly losin' time at this rate," said

Jack. "If we go much farther we'll lose pretty near a whole day's trip, comin' back against the current."

"Can't be helped," returned Jan. "It may save us a good many days' trip if we can get our hands on that fellow."

"How do you know—" began Jack, when Sandy interrupted vigorously.

"Quit fashin' our ears wi' silly chatter! We ken na more than ye do, so haud yer peace. We maun use all our senses, lad," he added more kindly, "and no fritter them away idly."

No sooner had he spoken, than, as if to add emphasis to his words, a sound that was most unmistakably a rifle shot came from ahead. Faint as it was, even Jack recognized its import and bent to his paddle anew with desperate effort.

"There's another!" cried Jan suddenly. Jack was just in time to catch a little puff of white dart up against the blue sky from a long rocky stretch a half mile ahead, when the report of the rifle came to them. Sandy instantly swept the canoe into the shelter of the shore, out of sight.

"What's that for?" exclaimed Jack hotly.

"Precaution, lad. Pierre an' Axel maun ha'

cornered the rat an' he's holdin' them off. The only question is whether they're above or below him."

"Probably below," declared Jan. "They must be around the point or we would have seen them. Besides, he wasn't shooting at this side of the bend or he would have seen us sure."

"Why would he travel so fast if he had done nothing worse than steal a canoe?" he said. "Don't you think he's done something worse than that?"

"Killed 'em, you mean?" said Jan.

Jack nodded his head with a gulp.

"No," Jan assured him. "A worthless Indian is a great coward; he will run just like that. The noise of your approach through the woods was enough to make him think all Canada was after him."

"I did make some noise," Jack confessed, relieved by Jan's assurance.

While they talked, Sandy had been doing some hard thinking. Standing at the edge of the shore, concealed behind some bushes, he had very carefully searched the point ahead of them. No further shots had been heard and now he turned to the two boys.

"I'm thinkin' Pierre an' Axel are down below, lads. If we go down by canoe an' by land we'll ha' cut him off all around. It's risky, though, if he means business about usin' that gun."

Jack was impressed by the earnestness of the man, and looked to Jan for advice, his cheeks a trifle pale. Jan appeared unmoved.

"'Tis my belief he'll gie in to numbers," continued Sandy. "Now, will you take the canoe, Jan, or shall I?"

"Suit yourself," answered Jan indifferently.

"Vera guid." Sandy stalked to the canoe and picked up his rifle. "Gie me ten minutes to get behind him."

The two boys looked after him in silence as he strode off and vanished amid the trees. Then Jack turned to his friend.

"Will we go straight down?" S'pose he shoots at us?"

"He won't dare," came Jan's quiet reply. "I think he has just been scaring off the other fellows. He wouldn't have the nerve to shoot *at* us. If he did he'd have to leave the country in a big hurry. Still, you can't tell about these half-breeds."

The last sentence was not very reassuring, but Jack did not intend to show the white feather before Jan. As he thought of that few hundred yards of black water to be crossed, directly under the rifle of the cornered half-breed, he knew that the most severe test of his nerve that was possible was about to take place. Then he remembered that Sandy would have a hand in the game. Still, one bullet from that waiting rifle might —

"Time's up," announced Jan, stepping into the canoe as he shoved it away from the shore. "In with you!"

And Jack resolutely climbed in, took up the paddle, and a moment later the swift current was whirling them down toward the point where the half-breed lay in wait.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SEARCH BEGUN

Jack, in the bow of the canoe, had to watch the water closely and had little time to think of the danger from bullets. The test did not prove so terrible as he had thought, as they swept down opposite the point. Then a sudden exclamation from Jan made him look up.

Perhaps two hundred yards away, on the rocky point below them, a man was standing. Even as he looked up Jack saw a quick puff of smoke and something buzzed overhead. Instinctively he ducked and nearly lost his paddle. Jan's laugh stung him into bravery, however, and he said nothing. Another puff of smoke, another report, and something splashed into the water ahead of the canoe, and so close that the spray struck Jack's face.

"Firing across our bows," said Jan quietly. "A gentle hint to return. Hello! There's Pierre an' my uncle."

Jack saw that they were nearly opposite the

man on the beach, who had now shrunk behind a rock. The bend was coming into view ahead and, as he looked, Jack caught sight of the two missing men. Their canoe was being held stationary some three hundred yards down the river. Jack was just wondering why they did not move up or down when two reports came in quick succession from the shore, followed by a yell from Jan.

But it was a yell of anger, not of pain, as Jack found when he glanced around in alarm. At the same moment he noticed something wet on his knees; looking down, he saw the water spurting into the frail craft from four bullet-holes between himself and Jan!

"Plugged the canoe," cried Jan. "Head across, quick!"

Jan did that himself, as he was steering, and the two boys put all their energy into the work. Paddle as they would, however, they were not quite in time to avoid a wetting. Just as they were drawing up to the shore the canoe filled and settled quietly in two feet of water.

A derisive yell followed them from the figure on the opposite shore. Jan shook his fist in anger as he rose from the water and took up the stern of the canoe.

"Get her on shore, Jack. I hope Sandy plugs him. Shall we try a shot?"

"No," Jack shook his head promptly. "He ain't hit us yet. Say, Jan, we got to hand it to him for slickness, eh? That was mighty neat the way he drilled the canoe without — "

"Hurray!" broke in Jan, dancing excitedly and pointing across. "Keep your eye on Sandy!"

Three short, sharp reports rang across the water from the crest of the ridge above the opposite shore. The figure who had been yelling and laughing at them suddenly whirled about. Another report and Jack saw the rifle torn from his grasp as by an invisible hand. Then the figure turned and made a dash for the water. Next moment a canoe darted out into the current, while the half-breed lay at full length in the bottom.

"Look at that!" gasped Jan. "He done that so's Sandy couldn't work his own trick. Sandy won't fire now for fear o' killin' him."

"But there comes Pierre and Axel!" cried Jack in high excitement. The canoe, which had been staying in mid-stream, suddenly sprang toward the seemingly empty one drifting down on

the current. Then the figure of the half-breed appeared with leveled rifle.

"He's got between Sandy an' our canoe!" exclaimed Jan. "Sandy can't shoot — what's that?"

"He's backin' 'em down stream so's he'll be safe!" shouted Jack. "Oh, if we could only use this canoe!"

The leveled rifle of the half-breed evidently daunted Pierre and Axel. Faint shouts in an angry tone drifted upstream, and the boys saw the two canoes drift down, only a dozen feet apart, while the adroit half-breed kept between Sandy and the other canoe, in the line of fire. Thus it was impossible for the Scotchman to shoot, even had he wished to hit the half-breed, which was doubtful. The latter held off Pierre and Axel with his rifle while the two canoes slowly drifted down stream with the current. In five minutes they were out of sight of the boys, who then saw Sandy come down the opposite shore and wave at them.

"Can ye cross, lads?"

"Four holes in her," shouted back Jan. "Won't hold water."

"Won't keep it out, you mean," grinned Jack. He was disposed to be cast down at the adroit escape of the half-breed and regretted that he had not fired. Cooler thoughts prevailed, however. He recalled that Sandy had refrained from wounding the man, and he realized that it would be a serious thing, no matter what the provocation, should the affair reach the ears of the police.

"Stay where ye are," returned Sandy. Jan waved his hand and sat down to wait beside the canoe, where Jack joined him.

"What size rifle do you think it was?" he asked as they looked down at the soaked canoe.

"Looks to me like a 30-30," replied the other, after comparing the size of the cartridges in his belt with the holes. Jack sprang to his feet.

"He fired pretty fast, didn't he? Like it was an automatic?" Jan nodded. "Well, it's a cinch that he swiped Mr. Niles' dandy Marlin automatic, Jan. He was showin' it to me an' dad an' boastin' how fast she'd shoot, just before they left. That fellow must have been one of the guides!"

"Prob'ly," assented Jan. "We'll know mighty quick. Here come Pierre an' my uncle."

Sure enough, the other canoe was paddling like mad upstream. It went straight for the waiting Sandy, who stepped in, then shot across to where the boys were sitting. Pierre was the first to step out on the shore, and he flung down his paddle with a savage curse in his own tongue.

"Great bunch, we are!" grinned Jack at Sandy. "Why didn't you shoot him when you had the chance?"

"Na, na lad!" came the answer. "I smashed his rifle, though." And he held out the useless weapon. "Maybe I hurted his fingers but Sandy McNicolls wants no man's blood on his head."

"That's it, sure enough!" exclaimed Jack. "That's Mr. Niles' Marlin automatic."

"Now let's have a look at your canoe." Axel seemed to think that the recognition of the rifle was a thing of no moment. Pierre was already glancing at the canoe and he nodded.

"She's been all right," he declared. "I get me some spruce gum wit' birch bark an' fix heem."

As he darted off, the boys and Sandy turned

to Axel for explanations, which were promptly rendered.

"We came up with the fellow an hour or so before you appeared," he stated. "When he saw us he made for the bank and of course we followed him in. He let us get within a yard of him and then up went his rifle."

"Who was he?" broke in Jack.

"Frere Kek. We had forgotten our guns in the hurry of getting off, and we were helpless. He ordered us to go on down stream, and we had to obey. There we stayed until your arrival. No doubt he figured that we were alone and he would prevent us returning to our camp for guns until dark, when he could escape easily."

At this moment Pierre returned and set to work on the canoe, with Sandy assisting. They declared that all would be fit for travel in a half hour, for the birch canoe was easily patched. Then the five reëmbarked and made the best of their way back to camp, for it was decided not to pursue the Indian and so waste any more time.

The episode of Frere Kek resulted in a council of war. All were savagely disappointed over missing the Indian. They could have forced him

to tell where he had left the white men he had been guiding. There was no chance now of overtaking him in time to do them any good in their search. He was six hours ahead and it would be days before they could come up with him, to say nothing of the days before they could bring him back.

The thing to do was to push ahead as rapidly as possible. Axel and Sandy figured that they might expect to find Mr. Niles and Mr. Seymour a day and a half up the river. The Indian without doubt had stolen the canoe at night; probably near the middle of the night. He was a great coward and he would make off with the canoe as early in the night as he could with safety, so that he might put much water between him and the white men before they awoke to a discovery of their loss.

He would paddle all day as fast as he could and would not make his camp until after the next nightfall. He had come to the camp where Jack had routed him out, sometime after Axel and Sandy had visited it the evening before. Probably he had seen their tracks and was on the alert all night. If he had stolen the canoe

the night before, the place where he took it would be about a day and a half from where they were. Perhaps he had stolen the canoe before that. Of course he might have taken it two weeks before.

They decided to pass on up the river to the point where, according to their reckoning, Frère Kek might have stolen the canoe. Then they would decide what to do. On the way they would be very careful to examine the shores. The missing men would be coming down river on foot now. Perhaps they might strike in four or five miles from the stream, although Sandy was certain they would stick closer than that to the river, not knowing the country well enough to take advantages of cut-offs.

All that day the canoes landed frequently, one on the south bank and the other on the north. The river in many places was spread out to the width of a small lake and the boats did not try to keep track of each other, appointing a meeting place for the night camp fifteen miles up stream.

At each point where they touched, Sandy from his canoe and Pierre or Jan from the other,

would strike in at right angles to the river for a distance of a mile or two, looking for tracks of the men coming down. They found none and met at the night's rendezvous without news.

They camped that night on the very spot where Mr. Seymour, Mr. Niles and the Indians had camped the night after they left Forty Mile Point. Jan showed their signs to Jack, and Sandy corroborated his assertion that they had been made by the missing party.

"Ye maun tell by the boots o' one o' them," he explained. "Stiff soles and nails," he commented contemptuously.

Jack wondered that the men were not very weary that night. He was, as a result of his lack of sleep and the excitement of the previous night. But Axel and Pierre, who had spent more than half the night paddling, and all the day either paddling or tramping over the country, were apparently as fresh as though they had only been out for a stroll. Neither Jan nor Sandy showed the least signs of fatigue.

This night was the coldest they had experienced. Jack was aware of that but he did not suffer so much from the cold as he had done two

nights before. He rolled himself up early and made ready for sleep. The fire was roaring and crackling in the midst of the circle and Axel, Pierre and Sandy were exchanging experiences. Jan was listening. Jack would have listened but he was too tired and had too much on his mind.

The thought that his father had slept in the place two or three weeks before, took possession of him. Perhaps his father had made his bed on that very spot. He figured that his father had been there probably on the night of the seventeenth or eighteenth of October. He tried to remember what he had been doing that night. He could not recall, but of one thing he was certain: he had been tucked in his own bed at Menominee.

The comparison between their situations that evening suggested something to him that had coursed through his thoughts in pieces for several days. If his father was lost, never to be found — well, there must have come such a time to both of them. The thought of the responsibilities that would become his and of the duties that would fall upon him, braced him to look the worst in the face. He must be brave and he might as well begin now.

He thought of his father's hearty laugh, of his shaggy head and large, good-natured face. Probably his father, in that very camp, had been more than jolly, making all manner of fun of Niles and joking the Indians. Jack thought of all the good times he had had with his father, of their little trips after fish and birds, and of the deer hunts they had had. He thought of the fear he had always had of showing his love; the fear that it was not manly. He knew his father had the same fear. If he ever saw him again how close they would draw together!

Thoughts like these kept the boy awake long after the others had rolled up in their blankets and fallen asleep. The stars had traced their way half way to the zenith when fatigue finally overpowered him and he sank into unconsciousness.

## CHAPTER X

### THE FIRST MOOSE

Jack was awakened by a sensation of pain and for a moment he did not know what it was. Presently he became aware that he was suffering from extreme cold. The blankets that had been sufficient when he lay down in the warmth of the fire were not enough now to keep him even tolerably warm.

He sat up shivering. It was still dark, but the starlight from the clear sky was enough to show him the other sleepers lying about the fire and the canoes drawn up on the margin of the river. He got up, threw more wood on the coals, and huddled over the blaze, drawing his blankets about his shoulders. The vision of his father, perishing in such cold with no food, seized him again and he had all he could do to keep back the tears.

He crouched there until McNicolls stirred and arose. There was no sign of daybreak in the sky but there was the feel of its approach in the air; the first long sigh of the earth preparing to awaken to another day.

Jack heard the Scotchman b-r-r against the cold and saw him go down to the river. When he returned, Axel was getting up and McNicolls said something to him. Jack heard it but did not give any heed to what it was. He was thinking of his lost father.

It was some minutes before the significance of the remark penetrated Jack's absent-mindedness. It kept echoing through his brain but bore no message to him. At last he became aware with a start, what it meant. This is what McNicolls had said to Axel:

"The river is frozen tight across, mon, and we maun go no farther in the canoes."

When Jack comprehended what the guide had said, he jumped to his feet and ran to Axel and McNicolls, who were fussing with breakfast.

"What can we do now?" he whispered. "We're not going back, are we?" He knew they were not but advance seemed impossible to him. He had not yet arrived at years when plans can be easily readjusted to meet new conditions. Axel turned a kind eye on him.

"We'll go on afoot, Jack," he explained.

"Can ye pack, lad?" added McNicolls, eyeing

him critically with a view, apparently, to forming some idea of his muscles.

"I can do my part," Jack answered. He was determined that they should find no weak spot in him.

"We'll have to go slower, won't we?" Jack continued, after a pause.

"'Tis faster afloat, but we'll soon be comin' to the point where we'd leave the canoes, and so it's no great matter that the river's closed," explained McNicolls, nodding his head.

Jack, looking from one to the other of the men, saw that to them it was indeed no great matter, for there was no sign of anxiety or disappointment on the face of either.

"Ye maun go and gi'e the lad a hand with the canoes," suggested McNicolls, jerking his head toward the river brink where Jan was now busy hauling things out of the boats and piling them on the beach.

"What you doing, Jan?" asked Jack, hurrying down to him.

"Makin' up the packs," Jan answered. Jack saw that he was laying things out in five heaps, handling each object with close attention, feeling

its hardness and weighing its bulk at the end of his arm before he decided to which pile he would add it. The heaps were already formidable and much remained in the canoes.

"Whee," whistled Jack. "Have we got to carry all that?"

"It isn't goin' to run after us if we leave it here," retorted his chum, thinking Jack was raising objections to his part of the load.

"Who said it was?" snapped Jack perceiving he had been misunderstood. "What can I do to help?"

"You needn't help," answered Jan.

"I'm goin' to help and if you don't tell me what to do, like as not I'll do the wrong thing. You'd better tell me."

"Well, if you want to, you can hand the things out of the boats. I'll 'tend to distributing them. I know better where things ought to go because I know what I've put in each pile." Their spats never lasted long and Jan was already beginning to see that he was mistaken. "This isn't all," he ventured, presently, as Jack was handing things to him. "There's all the cooking kit up to the

camp and the blankets. It'll be some tote, believe me, Jack!"

"I don't care!" Jack declared.

"Yes you do; we all care. But we ain't goin' to kick about it," Jan corrected him.

"Of course, that's what I mean. I'd rather go light or ride in a canoe, myself."

They heard a step down river and looked up to see Pierre coming toward them with three rabbits dangling from his snares.

"See, young fellair," said the half-breed, grinning. "De trap, he's be heap bettair dan de rifle, for catch *wapoos!*"

After they had breakfasted, they carried the canoes into the bushes, covered them with loose brush so that they would not be seen readily and prepared to start. McNicolls outlined the program for the day. Axel had made his word law for all of them. The Scotchman, with Jan and Jack, would follow up one side of the stream and Axel and Pierre Tache the other. They would all keep a lookout for signs, although they did not expect to find anything more than a possible trace here and there of a camping place. They would meet at noon at a certain point on the river, well

known to both guides and to Axel. In the afternoon they would follow the same plan, and meet again for the night.

Pierre had the packs ready and he slung one of them on Jack's back. The weight of it nearly swung the lad off his feet before he caught his balance. He had his gun in his hands, thinking he might get a shot at some game. His heart sank within him as he thought of the hours and miles of tramping ahead of him but he made up his mind that he was not going to weaken if he broke his back with the bundle they gave him.

It was hard work from the first. The Scotchman set out at a round gait, a short, shuffling stride that made him seem to glide over the uneven surface of the ground. It looked easy enough to keep up with but Jack and Jan were both puffing and sweating before they had gone half an hour, while McNicolls went as smoothly as a motor car on a park boulevard.

The ground was rough and there was not the least sign of a trail. McNicolls seemed to know by instinct which way to go to find the easiest passage through the timber and around the rocks that jutted into the way now and then. He never

stopped to look about or to think things over; he went straight ahead, as a stream of water goes in finding the line of least resistance to its passage.

Jack's feet were not used to going without stiff soles and he began to think that Axel had made a mistake in putting him in the soft-bottomed moccasins. He thought he would have done better to have brought along a pair of heavy shoes. Before they stopped at noon he was footsore, and it seemed as though every step would bring him kneeling to the ground in pain. But he shut his lips and said never a word.

They arrived at the meeting place before the other party. McNicolls sat down as soon as he had started a little fire, pulled off his footwear, turned each article wrong side out, and beat it briskly over a piece of limb that lay on the ground.

"'Twill be best ye do the same, lad," he said to Jack.

Jack tried it. His feet, meeting the air, were relieved at once. "Let 'em cool well," Sandy advised.

When he thought his feet were ready to drop off with the cold, McNicolls told him to put his footgear back on as they were, wrong side out, and to

change each pair, putting on the right foot what had been on the left, and vice versa. The effect was magical; Jack's feet felt like new. Then he confided to McNicolls the anxiety and pain he had felt all the morning about his feet, and confessed his doubts whether he had not better have brought heavy shoes.

"You'd have had raw places as big as a patch on a Dutchman's trousers of you'd had stiff soles on. Na, lad, Hoagland has the right o' it; he knows what's best for the feet. Another day, and ye'll no mind the hard places at all an' your feet'll come through it all smooth as a lady's hand."

The others had nothing to report when they came up. They ate a hasty lunch and started on again, appointing for their meeting place the spot where Axel and Sandy thought the camp might have been when the Indian stole the canoe.

Jack felt more and more the excitement of the search. The finding of traces of a former camp the night before and the presence in his own pocket of his father's waterproof match box, made his father's presence in those woods seem more real to him. Always before his mind's eye was the sight of the man trudging somewhere through

the wilderness, gaunt with hunger, groping for a way out. At each turn in the river, at each summit of a ridge, at each opening up of the tree growth, Jack's heart came into his mouth and his pulse beat faster as he searched the new view for a sight of the man in the flesh.

Peering far ahead in this way across a barren which they entered abruptly from a little rise in the ground, Jack felt his heart cease utterly to beat for a moment. For there, four or five hundred yards ahead, on the edge of the barren, stood a moose. Jack had never seen a moose in the wilds and the size of the animal astonished him. He was sure it was the Giant Moose.

The others in the party had seen the moose, probably before he had, and all stopped with one accord. Jack had his rifle with him, slung now by a strap over one shoulder. Standing perfectly still and without making any effort to remove his pack, the boy slipped the gun from his shoulder, threw a shell into the chamber, raised it, drew a close bead and fired.

It was the first shot he had had at big game. He had turned over half a dozen rabbits but the moose was the first real test. It took him a long

time to throw off the first excitement of the sight of the huge beast; the pack hung awkwardly and it was hard to balance the rifle perfectly with the weight pulling at his shoulders. But, before he finally pulled, he was certain he had drawn a good bead and that the muzzle of his gun was as steady as a rail.

Still looking through the sights after he had fired, Jack beheld a dun, kicking heap on the ground where the moose had stood. His 30-30 was vindicated. He was more than surprised, when they came up to the animal, to find that it was a small one, as moose go. It was nothing but a yearling bull. Judging from the way it had loomed up before Jack's eyes the boy thought the Giant Moose must look as large as an elephant. He wondered whether he would be able to rid himself of buck fever when he should come upon the giant, and he began to prepare himself by imagining how huge the beast was going to look. By this time he no more doubted that he would find the moose and his father in some strange way than that the sun would set that day and rise the next.

## CHAPTER XI

### A PECULIAR SUPERSTITION

They made camp that night in a sheltered nook a little distance from the river and went to the trouble of putting up a couple of lean-tos. Sandy and Pierre saw snow in the sky and wanted to be ready for it.

Before they went into camp they searched both banks of the stream for some distance, looking for trace of the permanent camp but they found nothing. The Scotchman concluded that the Indian had had the canoe for more than a day and a night when Jack routed him out and Axel and Pierre agreed with him.

Jack was worried over the prospect of a snow storm. It would cover any trail the missing men might have left, he feared, and make it that much harder to find them. Sandy's late assurances that it would not make much difference he had come to look upon only as an attempt to cheer him up.

The snow was in the air before the party turned

in for the night. Jack lay for a long time watching the flakes disappear into the fire. It was fascinating. They came floating down until they fell into the rush of heated air that swept up from the blaze. They charged this way and that in the ascending whirlpool, pink and glistening in the firelight and at last vanished into steam.

In the morning there was ten inches of snow on the ground. The boy's courage fell at the sight, for somewhere in the midst of that cold and startling expanse, his father might be in a last despairing struggle. Or perhaps he lay beneath its blanket. Jan was scouting for wood and Jack joined him.

"What'll we do now?" he asked

"What d'you mean?" returned Jan, tugging at a branch half buried in the new fall.

"How can we track 'em?"

"It'll take a lot of snow to hide their tracks from Sandy," Jan said.

"But how'll he do it? The ground's hidden."

"Wait and see," suggested Jan.

Jack was not satisfied; he thought his chum was crying up hope when there was no hope. Axel, Sandy and Pierre were in consultation when

Jack returned with a load of wood. He dumped the wood and walked over to the group.

"What are we going to do now?" he asked.

"This is the fifteenth of November," Axel said. "It's a month since your father and Mr. Niles came into the wilds. Either they have made their way out, or they are safe at Lac Seul Post or they have settled down somewhere to wait for help. There are two ways they could have got out after they lost the canoe. One would have been to have struck out for White Dog. That they didn't do. They wouldn't try to make it to White Dog without following the river and we know they haven't done that.

"The other way would be south to the Canadian Pacific. By going south from any point here they'd hit the track. Mr. Seymour knows that. It might be the shortest way out for them. If they haven't gone to White Dog — and they haven't — and if they haven't gone south, they may have made Lac Seul Post. McNicolls and I are goin' to go around the south side o' Lac Seul and double the east end to make sure they haven't started south. We'd cross their tracks

and I think we'd be able to find traces of them in spite of the snow if they've gone that way.

"You and Jan and Pierre'll go to Lac Seul Post along the north bank of the river and lake. You're goin' to look around a little before you strike out for the post. We're sure they didn't make a permanent camp where they expected to, high up on the English River. We're sixty-five miles from White Dog and it's only twenty-five miles to the lake. O' course, they may be between here and the lake. You and Pierre and Jan are goin' to find out. If you don't strike their camp you'll know they've changed their plans and gone into the country north and west of Lac Seul.

"Pierre knows that country and he knows where a permanent camp would be made. He'll cover most of the spots where we'll be likely to find your father and Mr. Niles, and you'll make it in to Lac Seul if he don't find 'em. You'll get there as soon as we do. We'll have to go pretty slow as I'm a little rusty. But Sandy's as good as any.

"The snow is not goin' to be so bad as you think," Axel went on. "It may help. If we find tracks they have made since the storm, it'll be

easy enough to follow them. But we can't tell. We'll try everything that we can think of and when we get to Lac Seul, if we haven't found 'em, we might as well go home. They'll either be dead by that time, or they'll be safe until spring. You're a brave lad, Jack, and you might as well know how things stand."

"I'm glad to know just how you feel about it, Axel," Jack answered. "I've been thinkin' you were afraid to tell me all you thought and I didn't like it. I'm no baby."

Sandy McNicolls put a hand on his shoulder.

"Na, you're no bairn, lad!" he said and Jack was comforted by his tone and manner.

Sandy and Pierre proceeded to make up the packs that he and Axel were to take with them. They had to carry food not only for themselves but for the missing hunters in case they should find them. They had more than a hundred miles ahead of them and they would be a week at it, at the least. Already the party had dipped heavily into their supplies. The two men were an hour about the task.

Meanwhile Jack and Jan, under the instruction of Pierre, were helping in the construction of a

sled for carrying their outfit. They had the tents to pack, all the provisions that were left and the remains of the moose. The latter would keep them in food for some time.

They made the sled of saplings that Pierre cut down and trimmed. Two stout pieces served for runners. They were straight, excepting that they curved at the ends, for the front of the sled. Crosspieces were notched into these and pegged down. The holes for the pegs were made by heating Jack's ramrod in the fire and boring with the red-hot end. Jack whittled out the pegs, using spruce. The sled was six feet long and two wide and the front of it was lifted by the natural curve of the saplings that Pierre had selected.

Axel and McNicolls started as soon as what they were to take with them had been laid out. Their departure was as simple and without show as if they were going for an hour's tramp into the woods. Axel said good-bye to Jack and nodded his head at Jan, but that was the only demonstration that took place.

Jack turned from his work on the sledge to watch the two disappear in the barrens which they were to traverse. They struck off to the

east, bearing a point or two to the south, which would bring them along the south shore of the lake. The earth seemed very large to Jack when, at last, they vanished from his sight and he realized that they had only begun the long journey of more than a hundred miles.

By noon the sled was finished and packed. Tent ropes and thongs from the moose-hide did for a harness and two drew on the sled at a time, taking turns. Jan and Jack started; after an hour Pierre took Jack's place; an hour later Jack relieved Jan and in another hour Jan let Pierre have a rest. In this way each worked two hours and rested one.

It was hard work, as the snow covered the uneven ground, hiding the footing. More than once Jack sprawled into drifts, filling his sleeves with snow. The ropes cut his shoulders. The sledge runners were not shod with steel and dragged heavily. But on the whole it was easier than packing on their backs. Game was scarcer than Jack had expected to find it, for he had thought they would see deer, moose and bear at every turn. He realized now that wild animals have to be hunted; the yearling moose that he had shot was

the only big game that had come within reasonable reach of his 30-30.

The half-breed led the party and Jack was never done marvelling at the way in which he picked out the trail they followed. He seemed to know by instinct which was the easiest way through the thickets and over the ridges. If he came to a huge rock, he did not stop an instant to decide on which side to turn and when they came to the other side Jack always discovered that Pierre had taken the best way around.

They crossed the river soon after leaving camp. The going on the snow-covered ice was much better than over the barrens or through the woods, but Pierre Tache would not follow the stream long at a time. He was afraid that by doing so he would miss some sign of the men for whom he was looking.

After traveling about ten miles they made camp. Pierre, leaving the boys to unpack the sled and get out the food they would need overnight, struck off into the timber to "see what she's been lak," as he put it to them.

Jack's shoulders throbbed with pain, they were so tired from pulling the sled. His back ached

and his wrists were sore, for he had twisted the ropes about the latter to control the swinging of the nose of the sled as it went over the uneven places in the trail. Nevertheless, he pitched in with Jan to get things ready. He even put up a tent over the beds he made of cut boughs, although Jan assured him it was not worth while to do so for a night's stop.

"The snow makes the best tent in the world," he told Jack. "Roll up in your blanket and worm your way into a drift and you'll sleep as warm as toast. And dry, too," he added.

Pierre came in at dusk with no word. They ate a bit of the moose meat, with a cup of tea, and turned in early.

The next morning the little party made a late start and after a ten mile advance, went into camp about noontime, for tea and bannock. They had left the river about three miles to the south to reach a belt of timber and a rise in the land where rocks showed. Further advance was to be made through the edge of this thicket where it was not improbable the missing men might have made camp. Meanwhile, no signs developing here, Pierre planned to visit an old camping site on

the south side of the river, keeping an eye on the somewhat open ground beyond and north of the rise. With no definite program as to a further advance that day, after a pipe by the fire, Pierre sent Jan to the north and he slipped away over the snow toward the river.

"Meester Jac stay on de camp, ver' beeg snow she's been comin', mebbe," was the half-breed's parting comment.

In spite of this, his companions were not out of sight when the boy made plans of his own. Alone for the first time in this vast sub-arctic world, the land that broods and listens in frozen silence, Jack stood by the fire and looked about. To the east the sparse trees grew thicker, rising over the northern heights and sloping down toward the white frozen river. At last he was in the land of his dreams — and free!

## CHAPTER XII

### THE DESERTED SHACK

Jack looked up at the sky with a laugh. True, the brightness of the sun was hidden by a peculiar haze, but it did not look like snow to the boy.

"Meester Jac he don't stay on de camp, not if he knows it!" he chuckled, catching up his rifle. Pierre had vanished toward the south, so Jack struck off at an angle toward the north bank of the river for a little exploring on his own account. Mile on mile stretched the wonderful expanse of rolling whiteness, broken only by groups of trees or bare rocks. The snow was just thick enough to carpet the earth and proved no impediment to walking.

Jack followed the tracks made by Pierre for a little distance, amusing himself by stepping in the straight-footed, almost pigeon-toed marks of the half-breed. After a mile of this he struck off parallel with the river, gradually working toward it. The camp fell out of sight behind and now

the boy began to feel some of the awe inspired by the silence of the great desert places.

For perhaps three miles he went on, then noticed suddenly that it was growing intensely cold. He forgot this, however, as he saw a streak of gray dart across his path, and throwing off his mitten pulled up his rifle. By a purely lucky shot he dropped a rabbit and, as he slung the body to his belt, noticed that the blood from the bullet-wound was already frozen.

"Say!" he muttered to himself. "It's gettin' cold, all right! Mebbe I'd — huh!"

His soliloquy was cut short by a snowflake that floated past him. Looking about, he saw that just ahead was a rocky, bare depression, drifted nearly bare of snow. As he was about to turn back, his eye was caught by something dark among the stunted trees on the far side of the dip.

"That seems funny!" he thought, pausing abruptly. "If that don't look like a shack I'll eat my hat! Wonder if I'd better have a look."

The snow was beginning to come down fast and for a moment he hesitated. There was no danger of getting lost, however, for he had carefully noted the landmarks as he came. So Jack plunged

through a drift that barred the way, and walked rapidly across the wind-swept basin toward the group of stunted pines.

As he approached, he saw that the black object was indeed a cabin or shack of some sort. In five minutes he stood before it. Despite his inexperience Jack realized at once that he had stumbled on some old winter camp of hunters, for although the shack itself was built of split rails and was half in ruins, the roof of hemlock bark was in perfect order.

"Must have fetched that bark clear from the river," concluded the boy. "Let's have a look inside."

The door still hung on one leather hinge and Jack pushed it in. The interior of the place was dark but he could make out a fireplace at the far end. This fireplace drew his attention at once. It had been built of stones and boulders, roughly cemented with mud, and it still held together. The chimney led outside. Otherwise the interior of the place was bare and dirty. In one corner was a deposit of mud half covering the "corduroy" log floor.

Struck by a sudden idea, Jack went out and

passed around the cabin. Yes, there was the outside chimney, half in ruins, but still serviceable. Jack stared at it for a moment, heedless of the thickly falling, dry snow.

"By golly!" he exclaimed. "If this ain't luck! What's the use o' bein' snowed up outdoors, when we got a reg'lar palace like this all handy? Me for camp!"

Throwing the body of the rabbit, already frozen stiff, inside the shack, Jack pulled the door to and started back to camp at a dogtrot. There was little wind, and the dry, fine snow was falling straight down; but when Jack left the hollow behind and struck away from the river valley, he caught a swirl of cold wind that cut through his heavy parka like a knife. But he held steadily to his dogtrot and after a mile had gained his "second wind."

He stumbled into camp and found Pierre already there. Jan was just coming in from the other direction. When he told of his lucky find Pierre knocked out his pipe with a grunt and a swift look around.

"I t'ink me she's been one ver' beeg snow,

mebbe," he said briefly, and began reloading his pack.

"Down with the tent, Jack!" laughed Jan. The little tent was hastily struck and folded and after standing the wood they had cut on end beneath a tree for the next traveler, all three started off. Jack led the way, and although his tracks were already obliterated, he had no difficulty in retracing his steps. Dusk was just falling when they saw below them the shack in the hollow and Jack's leadership drew a word of commendation from Pierre, much to the boy's intense delight.

Within half an hour they had a fire blazing in the fireplace, the door's wobbly hinges were repaired and the floor was strewn with boughs for a bed. When their wet outer moccasins had been stuffed with moss, plenty of which they found inside the shack walls, and hung up to dry slowly, Pierre cut up the rabbit and they enjoyed a hearty supper. Then came Jack's great surprise.

On the trip from the camp the half-breed had cut four long spruce saplings. These he now worked over for half an hour while Jack and Jan chatted comfortably. Both boys had often remarked a square, oilskin-wrapped package of

which Pierre took great care and the contents of which had remained a mystery. When he had set the four sticks in the smoke of the fire to dry, Pierre took out this packet and drew his knife.

"Hello!" exclaimed Jack with interest. "Are we goin' to see what it is, Pierre? What are you makin', anyway?"

For answer Pierre grinned and cut the bonds of the package with great care. Unwrapping several folds of the waterproof cloth, he disclosed a good-sized roll of twisted sinew.

"Gut!" grunted Jan. "Where's your fiddle, Pierre? What's it for?"

"He's be de smart fiddle!" replied the other. "He's be for play ver' smart tune bimeby. I show you."

Cutting off a short length of the sinew, Pierre took two of the sticks from the fireplace. With great care he worked over them until the ends had been firmly bound and the two sticks formed a great bowed ellipse, held apart in the center by another stick as prop.

"Snowshoes!" cried Jack wonderingly. "Is that it?" Pierre nodded and grinned again. "Why, don't you have to have a crust to use

'em? You won't have 'em done by mornin', will you?"

"T'ink me not," answered the 'breed, inspecting his work critically and setting it in the smoke while he took out the other two sticks. "I t'ink mebbe we stay here. Beeg snow. Ver' col'. De sun she's make good crus' for dem shoes!"

"So you think the snow'll keep up to-morrow?" asked Jan.

"High win'," nodded Pierre emphatically. "He's blow de snow down ver' fas', make drif' for fall in. Walk bettair wit' shoes, mebbe."

"But we can't!" exclaimed Jack in dismay. "I can't use 'em, can you, Jan?" The other boy shook his head and Pierre glanced at them in astonishment.

"W'at! You not have use' dem shoe?" A disgusted look came over his face and he reverted to his mother's tongue. "*Ooskawasis!* (Baby!) Nevair have wore de *usamik* (snowshoes), huh!"

Suddenly Jan leaned over and whispered in the ear of Jack, who gave a shout of delight.

"Never mind, Pierre!" he cried. "If we're stuck here to-morrow we'll show you something, believe me!"

By early dawn they were up and found that the Cree had predicted truly, for there was a wild blizzard sweeping down and the cold was intense. While Pierre and Jack were getting breakfast Jan went out with the axe. The shack was built of roughly split pine and spruce boards, and to the astonishment of Pierre, Jan stripped four of these from the leeward side of the building.

The half-breed protested vigorously at the first strokes of the axe but Jack laughingly reassured him and, when the hole in the wall had been replaced by pine branches and heaped-up snow, the four long rails were brought into the shack. After breakfast the two boys trimmed them with axe and knife and pointed one end of each while the half-breed watched in puzzled wonder as he worked at his snowshoes.

Jack set some water over the fire and by patiently holding the pointed ends of the four six-foot rails in the steam they were bent up and bound. Even then Pierre did not understand their purpose.

"He's never heard o' them, Jan!" chuckled Jack. "He's doin' some mighty slick work himself, though! Just look at that!"

He pointed to a finished snowshoe. The long elliptical frame had been criss-crossed with a netting of slender sinew by Pierre's deft fingers. A strap was held firmly in the center for the toe of the wearer. Pierre was highly pleased over their admiration.

"Eef I'm have time," he said, "he's been ver' good. No mattair. W'at you make, Meester Jac, huh?"

But Jack only laughed and winked, leaving him highly curious. During the afternoon they fitted straps to the center of each rail, and spent the evening polishing the bottoms.

"Pretty good," declared Jan as they prepared to turn in. "We'll show you a new stunt in the mornin', Pierre. How's the weather?"

Jack went to the door. "Clearin' up," he reported. "Colder'n blazes too. Will we go on to-morrow, Pierre?"

"I t'ink me so. Mebbe you fall in drif', snow ver' deep, den you stay here. We see."

"All right, we'll see," chuckled Jack. "Ever hear o' skis, Pierre?"

"Huh? Ski? W'iskey?"

"No, not whiskey," laughed Jan. "Skis —

snowshoes! That's what those things are," and he pointed proudly to their work.

"*Usamik?* Dem? You try for make bum joke; you ver' beeg fool." With which disgusted comment Pierre rolled over and emitted an exaggerated snore.

Both boys were used to skis, Jan in particular. Jack had always liked the sport immensely and, while he was not as adept at it as Jan, he knew that the ski would prove as useful as the snowshoe in traveling over the new snow.

At daybreak they found clear weather, a foot of snow or more, and a very discontented guide. Pierre had no faith in their contrivances, he was highly put out at finding that they could not snowshoe, and he remained about as talkative as a clam until breakfast was over and he was ready to try his shoes. As he took them outside, the boys followed with their skis and found the snow crisp and bad for traveling.

"We'll have a crust to-morrow," asserted Jan confidently. "Then watch Pierre, Jack!"

The half breed shuffled away without a word, pausing here and there to adjust his straps. When he was a hundred yards away Jan slipped into

his skis and put for him. At the crackle of the snow Pierre looked over his shoulder. His jaw dropped and for a moment he stared at the boys. Then he grinned, all his ill-humor vanished, and waved his hand.

"*Nunootimao!* He walks without snowshoes!" But as the boys did not understand Cree, of course, he reverted to English. "Ver' good! She's be lak one snowsnake!" In high glee at his own joke, he watched Jack as he slipped through the soft snow and joined them.

But Jack found it a very different matter when he had loaded up with his pack. New muscles were brought into play and he had to be broken in all over again. Pierre led them along three miles north of the river, and at noon halted for another look about.

As there was no use hunting for tracks or camping sites with the fall of snow covering everything, Pierre directed Jan to circle around to the north as before, while he and Jack struck down to the river again. Relieved of his pack, and with his footgear changed about, Jack easily kept up with the shuffling of Pierre, who broke trail.

Reaching the river and crossing it without hav-

ing found any "sign," they proceeded up the south bank, following a line of low bluffs. Here the timber was thicker and the snow lighter, which made heavier going for Pierre and lighter for Jack. They proceeded for a mile without any reward and Jack, in the lead, was about to turn to the river again when Pierre halted him short with a quick, sharp word.

Jack had slid up and over an immense fallen log in a drifted hollow, with Pierre close on his heels. As the boy stopped and glanced around in surprise, he saw that Pierre was greatly excited and was pointing at the snow directly beneath his feet.

"*Muskwa!*" cried the guide.

Now, all over the North country, the Cree word "muskwa" is used by white and red men alike to signify bear. Jack was frankly puzzled, for beneath him was a great drift of snow and all around them through the timber there was no sign of bear. At his questions the other chuckled.

"She's been hole-up for de winter," explained Pierre, pointing to a small brownish hole in the snow directly beneath the boy's skis.

"What! Is there a bear down there?" Jack

moved a step away with undue haste. Pierre laughed.

"She's be 'sleep, ver' good pelt. I t'ink we shoot heem, huh?"

"Sure!" cried Jack enthusiastically.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE INDIAN WAY

Pierre took out his hand axe. Striding rapidly to the nearest thicket, he cut a long sapling and trimmed it as he returned. Then he took up his position on the drift over the discolored hole.

"I stir heem up," he explained rapidly. "She's be ver' sleepy, ver' blin', shoot quick."

"I got you," replied Jack, on edge with excitement. Wasting no more words, Pierre stuck the pole down through the hole and gave two vigorous prods. Sleepy and blind though the bear might be, he was not past feeling and resenting those prods. Before the half-breed could withdraw his pole the snow below him upheaved suddenly, the sapling snapped off, and Pierre was flung into the drift behind. Jack saw an immense black form shoot up through the cloud of frosty snow, and pulled trigger.

An angry growl answered him and before he could fire again the infuriated animal was on top of him. Jack tried to jump aside, the point of

his left ski went up in the air and between the legs of the bear, and the next instant he was floundering in the snow with wild fear gripping his heart and savage growls resounding in his ears. Then came a sharp "crack!" from the guide's heavy revolver and a shout from Pierre.

"*Kitemakisew!*"

And as that conveyed nothing to Jack, he floundered desperately for a moment longer until he twisted on his back. As he did so a hand caught his leg and pulled him out of the snow onto something shaggy and warm. He took Pierre's hand and regained his feet quickly.

"Got him! Hurray!" The two looked down in triumph at the great bulk of the animal and Jack asked the half-breed what he had shouted.

"She's been Cree," explained Pierre with a laugh. "I say she's be one ver' dead *muskwa.* Good pelt, huh?"

"You bet!" Jack felt the long hair, at that time of year in the best condition. While he made a small fire Pierre began to skin the animal, and after an hour they took up their march back to camp with the heavy skin packed on the back of the guide, and several large bear steaks dangling like lumps of iron from the boy's belt.

They found Jan already in camp. The steak was thawed out and cooked, while Pierre added the shaggy skin to his already large pack. The two boys wondered how he would ever stand up under such a load, but Pierre snapped his fingers carelessly.

"One time," he said as he filled his short black pipe, "I'm get me los' in ver' beeg blizzar'. I'm have ninety pound' *sishcaucet* — he's be kin' o' trout, make good feed — an' I'm keel two *kisamisk* — ol' beaver. Den I'm fin' me beeg *moosua*, an' aftair I'm have skin' heem dat comp'ny pos' she's been eighty, ninety mile 'way. Nex' day I'm fin' me 'nothair *kisamisk*, skin heem, den catch me one fine *nekik* — ottair. Two t'ree day I'm pack dose skin an' dose *sishcaucet*. He's been ver' beeg job, mebbe, but bring me much dollair for dem skin when I'm reach' dat pos'."

"Let's see." Jack, in growing wonder, went over the list. "Ninety pound o' fish; three big beaver skins; moose skin; otter skin, and on top o' that a ninety mile walk, with a rifle to boot. That right?" Pierre nodded amusedly while Jan stared at him with open mouth. "Skins were fresh, so you prob'ly toted a hundred and fifty

pounds or more. By golly! I wish I had your shoulder muscles, Pierre!"

Jan had met with no more success than they had, as regarded the missing men. Despite his exciting experience of the afternoon, Jack felt despondent as he stared into the fire that evening and thought matters over. Jan was unusually silent also, and it was evident that he was not in a hopeful frame of mind.

The weather continued clear and crisp. In spite of the cold during the first day of snow, the sun had thawed the surface enough to form a substantial crust and the next morning Jack had far easier going than on the first day. They worked along several miles from the river and saw no sign of life. The great stretch of snow was untracked and spotless save for an occasional break of rock or trees.

Shortly after leaving their noon camp they came to a tiny lake amid a thick growth of pine, birch and spruce, with a patch of hemlock behind. From the lake toward the river ran a still partially unfrozen brook, and Pierre paused with an exclamation of delight.

"See dat?" He pointed to the lower end of

the lake. Then for the first time the boys saw that across the little stream was a rude dam. The pressure of the lake water behind forced the stream to remain open save in the coldest weather, and one word explained the dam.

"*Umisk* — beaver!"

"So that's a beaver dam, eh?" said Jan. "Ain't none left 'round where I come from, Pierre. Ever see one before, Jack?"

"No," replied the boy, gazing at the scene before them.

"I t'ink me mebbe we make stay here," said Pierre. "I show you Injun way to trap de *umisk*. Catch 'um 'live!"

"Alive!" cried Jack in surprise. "How's that? Thought you used a reg'lar steel trap?"

"Dat new way," grinned the guide. "Dis ol' Injun way. You make camp. I'm be back bimeby."

Throwing off his pack and taking only his hand axe, Pierre shuffled off over the snow while the two wondering boys put up the tent beside the stream at the lower end of the lake. Before they had finished cutting boughs for the beds and making up the fire, he returned with an armful of birch stakes, each four or five feet long.

"Now," he said, "bring dose axe an' I show you."

The lake or pond was a hundred feet wide and frozen over solidly. The boys followed Pierre to the upper end, where the streamlet entered the lake. Under the guide's orders a hole was chopped through the ice across the stream, here some six feet wide. As fast as this was made Pierre drove in the stakes a few inches apart, forming a fence across the stream bed that was rapidly frozen solid again.

"Now," said Pierre when this was done, "you see dem spruce dere?" He pointed to a huge tangle of snow and roots that rose in a mound on the bank. "He's be de lodge, I t'ink. *Umisk* she's be in dere. We take pole an' bus' heem open."

While the two boys cut long poles Pierre prepared more of his stakes. Then under his directions the dome of the lodge was broken into and the boys thrust the poles around inside while the guide cut a hole in the ice at the lake-edge and set a fence to prevent the beaver from returning to the lodge.

This done, Pierre made a careful circuit of the

lake, scanning the shores keenly. The two boys, who had seen nothing as yet of any beaver, were just a trifle incredulous. Jack in particular was sniffing disgustedly when the guide returned.

"Nevair min'," grinned the latter. "I t'ink mebbe we get dat Meestair Umisk ver' queeck. Take dis." He handed Jan a short stout spruce stick. "Dis way."

Pierre led them to the opposite shore of the lake and pointed to a large pine standing ten feet back. "Dose beavair, she's have hole in de bank to swim to. She's be under dat pine, mebbe. We stake de watair firs'."

All three set to work, and in ten minutes there was an opening in the ice by the shore three feet across. Pierre scraped out the chunks of ice and carefully staked a semicircle with the ends touching the bank. Then he led the boys to the big pine and pointed to a spot.

"Bus' heem open dere."

It was no light matter to break through the snow and frozen earth with the small axes, but when this was done Pierre removed his coat, stripped his left arm bare and went to the edge of the hole in the ice. He then ordered Jan to

thrust the stick into the ground and stir around. No sooner had this been done than there was a wild commotion in the water over which Pierre was kneeling, the half-breed thrust in his naked arm, and with a shout pulled out a fat beaver which he despatched with one quick blow of the axe.

"Say! Ain't that nifty though!" Jack stared in admiration at the grinning half-breed. The cleverness of the plan burst on the boys for the first time, but Pierre ordered them to go on breaking up the ground toward the lake. They did so, and secured three more beaver from this one hole, or "wash" as it is more correctly called. The last was a "kisamisk" or old beaver, and Pierre was more than satisfied with the result of the hunt.

"Are there any more washes?" asked Jack while the guide was rubbing a brisk circulation into his arm.

"I t'ink mebbe one more, by dat spruce," and Pierre pointed to another tree at a little distance. "We let heem go, dough. She's be all young beavair, mebbe. Not wort' de trouble."

The guide slung the "kisamisk" over his

shoulder and when the boys picked up the other two they were astonished at the weight of the beautiful sleek-skinned animals. As it was growing late they went into camp. The boys built a fire while Pierre skinned the beaver, carefully putting aside the meat of the broad flat tails and throwing the rest away.

That evening, in "Umisk Camp" they had for supper the greatest delicacy of the north — beaver tail. There was more than enough, and the boys were amazed again at the quantity which the half-breed ate. For the first time they fully realized what "Injun feeding" meant, and Jack concluded that if Pierre did not get another meal for a week he would be in no danger of starvation!

"Say, Pierre," began Jack that evening as they sat around the fire, "I was readin' some books by a big writer, down in the States. He says that if a fellow gets out in the wilderness in a rain or snow storm, the best way to make a fire is to break off a young dead birch an' get some white powder that's in the center — "

"One beeg lie!" interrupted Pierre emphatically. "I know 'bout dat fellair what she's

been write. Las' year a man have tol' me 'bout heem. I'm tell heem go for try dat plan. So she's take some matches an' hees axe an' bus' open two t'ree hundair' dem young birch. Bimeby she's come back, she's t'row down dat axe an' she's cuss lak mad. When she's get t'rough I'm say, ' W'at for you look inside? Eef you fin' de birch, w'at for you bus' heem down? W'at for you not take heem *wuskwi* — heem birch bark, huh? ' I tell you dat man she's been mad! "

" That's so! " laughed Jan. " I read that yarn too. I never found any white powder."

" Stands to reason," chipped in Jack. " You got the bark all ready to pull off, so what's the use o' doin' more work? Funny I never thought o' that! It all goes to show that what you find in books an' what you find when you get down to facts ain't always the same."

" We're havin' a heap o' fun all right," said Jan after a little. " But it ain't right, Jack. It ain't what we're here for by a long shot."

" I know," Jack nodded. " I feel the same way, Jan. It don't look's if we're gettin' anywheres, does it? Don't you s'pose we could spread out more, Pierre? We couldn't get lost with the river to steer by."

"I don' know," replied the 'breed dubiously as he drew at his pipe. "De sky, he's look lak more snow. Mebbe not. See in de mornin'."

The little expedition had now advanced about thirty miles from the camp where they parted from Axel and McNicolls.

But the morning only drew another doubtful headshake from Pierre. The day seemed clear enough and the boys were so urgent that against his inclination the guide gave in and ordered a separation. It was decided that Pierre would cover both banks of the river, Jack would keep about three miles to the north and Jan would go still farther north.

"An' where'll we meet?" asked Jack when camp had been broken and they stood ready to start.

Pierre described a peculiar bend in the river, eight miles farther up. It would be easy for the boys to locate this, as all they had to do was to strike south to the river and follow it up or down according to whether or not they found Pierre's trail.

The crust was good by this time and Jack watched his companions speed away on either

side for a few moments. Then he stroked out with his skis and bent to his load. Ahead of him was a wind-swept stretch of low hills scattered with a few clumps of trees and the country seemed breaking into wider sweeps of barrens. As far as he could see there was no mark on the snow, no sign of man or beast except an occasional bird-track. Once, as he passed through a thin clump of hemlock, his skis went through the weaker crust and released a partridge. Jack gave a jump that nearly took him off his feet when the loud " whir-r-r " arose at his side, then he laughed and went on with the feeling that after all there was life in this desolate waste could he but know it.

The wind was bitter and swept down from the northwest. Jack knew that he must have gone three or four miles when suddenly he realized that the sky had become a dull steel gray, nearly hiding the sun from view. The wind came in fiercer gusts but this did not alarm the boy until, as he glanced off to windward, he gasped and rubbed his eyes. Only a minute before he had noted a large hill perhaps a dozen miles away. This had absolutely vanished, as had one or two

other landmarks in the same direction! Was he dreaming? Had the vast fields of snow affected his brain? For a brief instant Jack was almost panic-stricken; even as he stared a dark patch of trees a couple of miles away seemed to melt into the sky!

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE MAN FROM CARLISLE

"By cracky!" ejaculated the boy, "it's a snowstorm!"

Jack was so fascinated by the sight that he forgot all else. Before he thought to get his bearings the snow arrived, and never in all his life had the boy seen such a blizzard. It was absolutely impossible to see ten feet away. The wind came howling across the barrens and awoke a moan from the scattered pines, that made Jack shiver.

"I've certainly got my foot in it now!" he muttered as he gazed blankly around. "Trail covered up, nothin' in sight — by golly! I got to go some, an' go mighty quick!"

But in which direction? The snow was infinitely more blinding than a fog, for the driving particles confused the senses. Jack recalled that the wind had come from the northwest. Therefore, if he kept the wind on his right, he would be heading toward the river.

So the boy tightened up his belt, for it was now noon, bent to the weight of his pack and shuffled forward. The crust held his skis well and the new snow made them slide easily over the surface, but the terrific wind and driving snow was a terrible handicap. Jack covered his face as much as possible and kept going.

When he left the little hilltop on which he had been and got to the level barrens he met with a new difficulty. The wind swept the fine dry snow in dense clouds along the crust-surface and he had to fight his way, gasping for breath and with frequent pauses for rest. Jack was now beginning to realize what had formed the iron souls of those early "Company" men, the nameless thousands who had explored and opened up this whole vast country; as he struggled along he grimly determined that he had just as good stuff in him as Radisson or Grosvelliers ever had, and he set himself to the fight.

Mile after mile slid by, but Jack could form no conception of how far he had gone. With each step he peered ahead, trying to make out the river; suddenly the thought came to him that he might have crossed the ice without knowing it!

At this Jack stopped short. Pulling up his rifle he fired in the air three times, and listened. No answer came but the mocking shriek of the wind and the moaning wail of the pines and firs. The boy's heart sank for a moment, as he wondered where his father was in this blizzard. Again he raised the gun and fired thrice, then moved forward hopelessly. What could he do? Where was Jan?

"S'pose I can camp if I have to," he said to himself, and ceased abruptly. What was that? A shot! With wild hope surging into his heart he tore off his mittens and replied. Instantly another shot rang out, and a faint shout. Jack yelled at the top of his power and moved forward; another shout answered, and then he saw something moving to his left. Pierre! No, it must be Jan, he concluded, and shouted again.

Two minutes later he was staring at a strange Indian, who stared equally hard at him. The disappointment at not seeing Jan, as he had expected, prevented Jack from speaking for a moment. Then, with a grin, the other held out a mitten.

"Whatcheer!"

"Whatcheer," replied Jack with the greeting of the north, as he shook the Indian's hand. The latter looked curiously at the skis and Jack saw that he wore large snowshoes of the common rounded shape, a fur cap, brilliant-hued parka with heavy sash, and carried a small pack.

"Where you going?" inquired the Indian.

"Am I near the river?" asked Jack anxiously. "I'm lookin' for a camp along the river somewheres."

"River? The river's ten mile off that way." The Indian pointed in the direction whence Jack had come.

"What!" cried Jack. "You're dreamin'! Wind's comin' from the northwest an' I've kept her on my right all the time."

The Indian smiled. "It *was* coming from the northwest, you mean! You can't depend on the wind in this country; I've been learning that for the last week or two myself."

"You've what?" The man's words struck Jack as strange. His English was fluent and perfect, his face looked different from those the boy had met with in other Indians — and yet he was an Indian right enough. "Say, if that's

straight I guess I'm up against it. Have you got a camp near here?"

"If you're lost, you'd better camp with me. I was just going to get under cover when I heard your shots and replied. It's getting on into the afternoon, so I may as well spend the night. Come along and we'll find a good spot. Got some grub?"

"You bet!" Jack fell in behind this curious Indian with mingled feelings of dismay, delight and perplexity: dismay that he was so far from his course, delight at having a companion and perplexity over who and what that companion was. For half an hour they tramped ahead; then the Indian stopped and pointed to their right.

They seemed to be in the shelter of a hill, for the snow now permitted them to see for a little space. Almost beside them was a bare boulder of gigantic size, to which the Indian had pointed. It was a good place for a camp and with a sigh of relief Jack slipped off his pack and they started in to work.

The Indian vouchsafed not a word except in short orders until they were sitting on blanketed

boughs inside a bough lean-to, with a blazing fire at the opening and a good meal disposed of. Then he glanced at the boy with a quizzical smile.

"My name's Thompson," he said as he held out his hand.

"Mine's Seymour, Jack Seymour," returned Jack as well as he could for his surprise. "Glad to meet — Honest, now! is that your real name?"

"Sure!" The Indian gave a hearty chuckle. "You'd better not ask that question again up in this country, Seymour! Yes, I'm an Indian right enough," and a touch of pride came into his voice and dignity into his features, "but of a different race than these Cree and Ojibway half-breeds. I am a Dacotah."

"Sioux!" exclaimed Jack eagerly, gazing at the other's stern and not unhandsome features with new interest. "Why, I thought all — "

"All my people were down in the States?" smiled Thompson as the boy paused, confused. "Most of 'em are. But when I left Carlisle four years ago I knew that there was little chance for me in a white world. My family could offer me nothing and my white friends wouldn't. So

I went up into Labrador and the east shore of Hudson's and James Bay, living the life of my fathers. I was called home a short time ago by my mother's death. Then I decided to strike up this way — and here I am."

"Gosh!" Jack's eyes were big. "Where you goin'?"

"Up and up into the north!" Thompson's eyes flashed. "Once my people owned all of this country. Did you ever hear of Pierre Radisson?"

"You bet!" cried Jack quickly. "I remember 'bout his findin' the Sioux over here an' livin with 'em! Sure!"

"Good!" Thompson nodded approvingly. "Not everyone knows that Radisson was the real founder of the 'Hungry Belly Company,'" — using a common slang term for the famous H. B. C. — "and so that old pirate of a Prince Rupert gets all the credit. Yes, I am in the land of my fathers in truth, but I am going on and on this time, up into the Barren Lands where the Gods dwell, and where the Ancient Ones whisper through the midnight of noonday! Ai! There is desolation, there where the day is of

six months! And what a grip it has on you — the grip of the Arctic that fascinates you and draws you onward and kills you in the end."

Jack was bewildered at this sudden outburst of confidence, but he lay back and drank in every word with eager interest. What a life this man must have had! But to the boy the great wonder of it all was that in the midst of a blizzard, miles from any human being, he should have met this wonderful Dacotah, who could probably trace his lineage farther back than many a lord, and who was evidently the dreamer and poet of his tribe. And here he was, with a slender pack of grub, making his way on foot from the English River to the Arctic Circle and speaking of it as a matter of course! Small wonder that Jack forgot the blizzard that was raging outside and the darkness that was beginning to fall, in the magical discourse of this chance acquaintance.

"What'll you do up north?" he asked. "Trap and fish, I s'pose. There are none of your people up there, are there?"

"None," came the reply. "I wanted to bring my brother with me but he was a clerk in a store

and refused to come. A clerk — faugh!" The Sioux spat on the ground angrily. "The descendant of chiefs a common clerk for white traders! Better that he were dead. Yes, there is good hunting up there. I have learned that under the Circle there is no whiskey, and that the red men there are worthy of their color. But tell me of yourself, Seymour. You are no common lout, and I was surprised to meet you, I confess."

"No more'n I was to meet you," grinned Jack happily. He told of the reason for their coming and of the supposed treachery of Frère Kek and his companion. When he finished Thompson thought a moment.

"Perhaps it was," he said slowly. "Yesterday I heard a shot in the distance, Seymour. I'm in a hurry to get up north before the season is over, however, and I didn't stop. I supposed that it was an Indian or half-breed. Perhaps it was your father. I've been coming up west or southwest of here, for I'm cutting across to reach James Bay."

"Say! Mebbe it was father, sure enough!"

exclaimed Jack excitedly. "When I get back in the mornin' I'll tell Pierre 'bout it."

"Tell Pierre!" repeated the other scornfully, throwing a stick on the fire as he spoke. "Can't you strike out for yourself once in a while? Do you think Radisson would have run back to 'tell Pierre' like some child running to its nurse?"

"Sure he would!" Jack flushed hotly at the scornful words. "He's waitin' there for me now, prob'ly. So's Jan. They're partners o' mine an' have a right to know what's up. Anyhow, I'm only a tenderfoot."

"Never mind," smiled Thompson suddenly. "I spoke hastily and bitterly, Seymour, and ask your pardon. Well, let's have some tea and see how the weather is."

The little lean-to was getting well snowed in now. Jack had carefully scraped the frosted snow from his skis, for they were now more valuable than his rifle to him, and had leaned them against the boulder outside. They were more than half buried now, which indicated at least four or five feet of snow out in the open barren.

"Another foot of snow by day," asserted Thompson as he returned to the fire and stretched

out in comfort. "Well, Seymour, if it was a month earlier I believe I'd stay and run down that Giant Moose myself!"

"Wish you would," urged Jack quickly. "He's worth while hunting, all right!"

The Sioux did not reply for a moment. He lay gazing deep into the blaze and Jack forbore to interrupt his thoughts until he did so himself.

"You've heard about Gilbault and Lareau, of course."

"Why, no!" replied the boy in surprise. "Who are they?"

"They aren't, any more," came the grim response. "I thought you must have heard the story, in connection with the moose. Want it?"

"You bet I do!" cried Jack eagerly, and the Indian smiled over his tea as he gazed into the fire.

"I only heard it the other day myself, at Winnipeg. Three years ago I was on the Rupert River in Labrador. My partner was a fine young half-breed named Jean Lareau, who had drifted over there from these parts. He told me a little about the Giant Moose and said that he and another and much older half-breed, Pete Gilbault,

had sworn to run the beast down. Neither one had the least belief in its supernatural qualities. Jean and I hunted together that winter, then we parted. I heard no more of him until an Ottawa near Winnipeg told me the story. Here it is for you:

"It seems that Jean and Pete got together the winter after he left me, and decided that the time had come to finish the Giant Moose. They made great preparations for the hunt, although they could get no one else to accompany them. It is said that Pete even had a cartridge fitted with a silver bullet, in case the animal was supernatural after all. They started out from Lac Seul and never returned; the rest of the story was pieced together later by Indians and hunters who followed their trail.

"They got on the track of the beast somewhere in this locality. They followed him for a week, out into the barrens, and finally came to a thick wooded stretch. There was no indication that the moose trail was at all fresh, but they concluded that the beast was somewhere in these woods, for they made a fine feeding-ground. So they decided to separate and cover the woods in

a thorough search. Whichever came upon the animal or his tracks was to signal the other by firing his gun if possible; if not, by a smoke.

" Pete Gilbault was the first to actually find the Giant Moose. He had come upon no tracks, there was not the slightest sign of any living creature near him, and it may be that he relaxed his vigilance somewhat. So, when he saw a smoke rising half a mile distant and knew that Jean had come across something, he started for the place on the instant.

" Suddenly, as he was going down the frozen bed of a small stream, something huge and terrible leaped out from the ten-foot bank above him. He had barely time to pull up his gun and fire wildly when all four bunched feet of the Giant Moose came down on him. Perhaps you know the cutting power of a moose's hoofs? "

Jack nodded, in awed fascination.

" Then I need say no more. It was only by the clothes that Pete's body was recognized when it was found later, driven deep under the drifted snow by that tremendous bulk. As for his silver bullet, it had gone wild."

Thompson paused in order to build up the fire, which Jack had forgotten. The boy stared at him, pale with the excitement and horror of the story. A moment later the Sioux resumed his narrative.

## CHAPTER XV

### TRACKS IN THE SNOW

Thompson settled back comfortably on his H. B. C. blanket and stared anew into the embers.

"Where was I? Oh, yes. Well, what followed is just a little mixed up, naturally, but the snow told the story well enough. It seems that Jean, hearing the shot, came to meet his comrade. Now see the almost human intelligence of that creature, Seymour. Not far from the two men was a small hill. On its crest were two big pines almost touching each other. The Giant Moose left Pete when his work was done and ascended this hill. Jean must have been climbing from the opposite direction at the same time.

"The moose burrowed underneath one of the big pines, whose wide snow-weighted branches drooped almost to the ground. How he did it without dislodging the snow above is a mystery; the Ottawa swore that it was only by the help of the devil he did it. A few moments later Jean reached the top of the hill and searched the coun-

try for signs of Pete, standing just between the two snow-laden pines. A moment later the Giant Moose leaped out from his hiding-place, full on the unsuspecting hunter.

"But Jean was not caught as his friend had been. As the brute reared above him he fired pointblank and sprang aside. A few drops of blood showed later where he had slightly wounded the moose.

"The hilltop was bare of drifted snow and the animal was not hindered in its movements. Perhaps he had chosen the place for that very reason — who knows? Jean did not dare face another charge from those terrible hoofs, and he darted under one of the big pines. Now came another sample of the intelligence of that magnificent creature."

"Magnificent!" broke in Jack indignantly, his eyes alight. "How dare you call him magnificent, right after tellin' how he ambushed Pete?"

"Well, what of that?" Thompson met his look with a peculiar, thin-lipped smile that bared his teeth. "The two men were hunting him, were they not? Any brute has a right to fight for his life, and the more intelligently he goes about it

the more magnificent he becomes. It required more courage in him to meet the ' firesticks ' of the half-breeds than it did in them to try to shoot him a hundred yards away! How about it? ''

'' Come to think of it, I guess you're not so far off at that,'' Jack replied, although a little dubiously. '' You couldn't blame him for fighting back, I s'pose. Even then the odds were in favor of the men, too.''

'' Of course they were,'' answered Thompson, '' if they had used their brains. But to continue. The Giant Moose, seeing that Jean was in the shelter of the pine and he was in the open, made instantly for the other tree. Before Jean could fire again the two enemies were out of sight of each other beneath the widespread boughs of each tree!

'' It must have been a queer situation. Jean did not dare leave his tree, for there was none other within a hundred yards. The moose couldn't leave *his* tree, or Jean would pot him. Once Jean tried to sneak off from the opposite side of his tree, but the moose heard him and he didn't dare repeat the experiment. It probably never occurred to the animal to do the same thing,

so there they stayed only a few feet apart, each completely hidden from the other."

"Was it pretty cold?" asked Jack suddenly.

"That's exactly the point of the whole business," answered Thompson with a nod. "It was about thirty below just then. That didn't bother the moose in the least, but it meant a good deal to Jean. He could only move for a few feet around the tree trunk — later they found a hard beaten circle where he had run around and around after his ammunition gave out."

"Gave out!" cried Jack in surprise. "Why, he only fired one shot!"

"So far," corrected the other. "But a little later on he conceived the idea of riddling the other tree with bullets. So he dropped on one knee and, probably in a wild rage, sent every one of his cartridges into the other mass of branches. When he had finished, the head of the Giant Moose broke through with a sniff, and he knew he had failed."

"Don't see how he could," commented Jack skeptically. "If the other tree was so close and he had a dozen bullets, he should 'a' stirred things up mighty lively. Don't seem possible all his shots missed."

"They did, though," smiled the Sioux. "Whether through cunning or because he was tired, which is more likely, the moose had lain down in the snow, watching the other tree through the branches. His weight and warmth settled him pretty deeply, and Jean probably fired with the idea that the brute was on his feet. So you see every bullet went over him. And then Jean began to freeze."

"Why didn't he light a fire?" inquired Jack. "He must 'a' had lots of wood handy."

"He did — too much altogether!" was the reply. "Don't you see, the branches that shielded him were loaded with snow! If he built a fire the snow would simply melt down. Then the fire would be put out, or else the branches, relieved of the weight, would spring up again and offer an easy entrance to the animal."

"I see," nodded Jack with a little shudder as he thought of the man's terrible predicament. Unfortunately for himself, he did not take the lesson to heart. He was to remember that incident later when he himself camped beneath a snow-laden tree.

"How long Jean remained there," resumed

Thompson, " is not known. Two or three times, probably at night, he tried to make a break and catch the moose napping, but each time he failed. In desperation, he made a little shelter for a fire and started one. The half-burned sticks showed how it had been put out by the first melting of snow above. He had plenty of food, but that would not warm him. Of water he had none, and knew better than to take to snow instead.

" At any rate, he was slowly freezing to death. No doubt he determined to seek an easier death, for he started boldly out from the tree. His people found his tracks, and close beside them those of the Giant Moose. Did the animal know that his enemy had no ammunition? Strange as it seems, it must have been so, for the moose deliberately walked only a few feet from Jean until the nearest trees were only fifty yards distant. Then the animal moved around and faced the hunter.

" Even then, with safety so near and the moose before him, Jean did not give up. He was brave, in spite of his foolishness. Knife in hand, he dodged from side to side in the attempt to get past that animal and reach the trees. Now

observe the cunning of the moose once more. Knowing that the man might dodge his charge, he deliberately allowed Jean to pass him. Then, as the man was running for the trees, the Giant Moose charged up *behind* him — and it was all over. They found Jean lying on his face, knife in hand, and the frozen snow told the story clearly."

Thompson was silent and Jack drew a deep breath. Was this tale true, he wondered dimly, or had he listened to some fiction of the woods intended to scare him? But the sombre face of Thompson answered his silent question only too plainly, and the boy shivered slightly. The other noted the movement with a quick smile.

"Make you feel shaky, Seymour?" he asked quietly. "Wouldn't like to come across that animal so much now, perhaps?"

"You can bet your boots I would!" Jack shot back. "Didn't you say yourself the two half-breeds got caught 'cause they didn't use their brains? Well, I don't know as much about the woods, but I guess I've got a heap more brains than that."

"Good boy," smiled the Sioux. "You have the idea right enough. Say, that's quite an idea

of yours, using skis! How on earth did you come to think of it?"

"I didn't," grinned Jack. "Jan did." And he related how the skis had been made and why. Thompson examined the skis attentively and looked up with a nod.

"Pretty good work, everything considered. That's quite an idea, too. I used to ski a bit myself, and I believe I'll make a pair this winter. It will be a good deal easier than snowshoeing."

"Not so sure, though," replied Jack.

"True enough. If you find the Giant Moose with those on your feet, look out! You may have to jump mighty sudden — or you may not have time to jump, like poor old Pete."

At this idea Jack determined on the spot that if he ever found the Giant Moose trail he would keep his eyes open, wide open. Well he knew that the half-breeds and Indians were no cowards; if they feared an animal as they did this one, there was plenty of reason behind it. Noting his sober face, the Sioux diverted his thoughts from the subject.

"This reminds me of a night I spent last winter on the Leaf River, far up in north Labrador,"

he said slowly. "I was exploring rather than trapping, for it's practically Eskimo land up there, with little timber. I was all alone that trip and was sitting by my fire when suddenly I heard a step.

"Before I could move, a strapping big brute of an Eskimo walked in on me and sat down. He calmly seized a chunk of raw meat from my fire and tore it up without a word. When he had finished it and somewhat appeased his very evident hunger I tried to talk with him.

"I tried every language I knew on that chap, and I know several. When I finished and gave up in despair, judge of my amazement when he addressed me in very fair English! I had never suspected that he could speak English, of course.

"Well, that fellow had visited New York several years before with Peary and then returned to the north. A fortnight before, he had been out walrus fishing. A storm had blown his kayak far south. Those Eskimo canoes will stand up under any kind of blow, you know. After two days of storm he had been wrecked on an icefloe and his kayak destroyed. For a week he had drifted south with the floe, living on what fish he

could spear, until he struck the line of shore ice. Then he came on foot through ice and snow until he had seen my fire, fortunately, for he was all but starved.

"It all goes to show, Seymour, that you never know what you're going to run up against in this country. I tried to induce him to stay with me, but in vain. Next morning off he went, with a supply of meat, in search of some of his own race, and I never heard of him again."

"That was queer, all right," agreed Jack. "You must have had a heap o' funny things happen to you! All the same, a man like you could make good anywheres — "

"It's not a question of making good." The Sioux caught his unspoken thought and his black eyes fired up. "It's a question of being treated as an equal, that's all. No, my people have no place in the world except on its outskirts. Why, lad, I will sweep through this north country like the chief that I am; these half-castes and whiskey-sodden red men are helpless before me. If I wished, I could become another Louis Riel and set the whole north in a flame of rebellion, make myself a leader and ruler and drive the whites

— " he broke off abruptly and went to the door with one spring, startling Jack by the suddenness of his movement. But the other turned with a laugh and a complete change of manner which conveyed a sufficient hint to Jack not to pursue the subject.

" It'll let up all right by daybreak," declared Thompson, " but I must be off before then. I'd like to help you in the hunt, but Pierre will probably be quite enough. It means a great deal to me to get up north without losing a day."

" Off before daybreak! " cried Jack. " Why, aren't you goin' to sleep? "

" Right now," laughed the other. " I never sleep more than six hours and seldom that much. Here are your directions for the river, if I don't see you in the morning."

Taking a long and a short twig, he placed them in the snow at the door of the lean-to, the longer twig pointing toward the river. With a hearty " Good-night! " the two then curled up and Jack was instantly fast asleep, for he was completely worn out by his work of the day. He never saw Thompson again.

When he awoke, the gray dawn of day was

stealing over the snow, and sitting up, Jack saw that the fire had been recently replenished. He glanced about, but there was no trace of the Sioux; his grub-pack had disappeared and so had his rifle and snowshoes. Jack realized that he was once more alone, and the loss of even his strange companion sent his spirits down to zero. He thought of the report to Pierre, however, and leaped up with a shout.

"Hurray! Now for grub an' the camp! Snow's over!"

Indeed, the blizzard had ceased. Thompson had dug out the entrance to the shelter before leaving, and as Jack stuck out his head he saw new, crisp snow piled high all around. He made a hasty breakfast and got his pack in shape. After making sure of his bearings from the two twigs by comparing them with outside landmarks, he put on his skis.

He found that they had sheltered below a bluff strewn with giant glacial boulders, now half snowed under. At one side was a thicket of pine, birch and hemlock. As the boy stood looking around he thought he could detect a marking in the fresh snow near the edge of this,

and went toward it out of sheer curiosity. The skis did not run so well on the deep, uncrusted snow and Jack realized that he would have a hard ten miles of it to the river.

Drawing near the clump of trees, he saw that some animal had indeed been near by, but there were no distinct tracks, the snow being far too deep. Jack followed the trail back into the trees with gun ready, but the thicket proved to be empty. It had not been empty long, however, for there in the shelter of a hemlock was a trodden moose-bed, such as Jan had showed him days before.

Here the tracks of moose showed plainly. They were quite fresh, and Jack came close to a distinct one and leaned over to see if it would smell, as Jan had said. As he did so he straightened up with something nearly akin to terror in his face, and glanced around rapidly.

The hoof-prints were the tracks of the Giant Moose.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A HIT AT SIX HUNDRED YARDS

Jack admitted afterward that in that first moment of discovery he was frightened — and very much frightened too. He half-expected the terrible moose to leap on him from every bush and tree, and slipped off his pack with rifle at the ready, but nothing happened. Slowly it seemed to the boy that the sense of danger was passing into another sense — a queer, indefinable notion that his father was somewhere around! So "spooky" was the feeling and so strange the fancy that Jack could not shake it off. He felt its absurdity, but as he stared at those imprints before him there, the remembrance came to him of the combination of his father's match box and those same tracks. It had become almost a superstition with him that the Giant Moose would lead him to his father, or was concerned with his fate in some way.

"Those tracks are 'bout a half hour old," mused Jack, his fear now completely vanished.

"By golly, that fellow must 'a' spent the night right 'longside us! If I go back to camp — I'm blamed if I will!"

With a sudden but firm decision Jack leaned over his pack. He knew the danger of his course, he realized the wildness of his reasoning, but with clenched teeth he swiftly caught up his pack and carried it back to the lean-to. Here he picked out some flour, tea and salt, enough for a day's trip; with this and his blanket he made a light pack and slung it over his back with his rifle. Making sure of his matches, he took his axe from his belt and swiftly cut a long pole to aid him in getting over the soft snow, and started off.

His pole proved useless without a netting to prevent it from entering full length into the snow, so he threw it away before he reached the thicket again. There was no time to experiment, he felt, and he picked up the fresh trail of the moose at a good clip.

"If it snows again before I get him it's good-bye Jack!" thought the boy. "But snow or no snow, I'm too close to let up now, by thunder!"

The deep snow had made terribly heavy going for the moose, and even if the storm returned, as it promised to do, Jack would have little trouble in following the recent trail. The feeling came to him stronger and stronger that Fate had sent this animal to lead him to his father, and Jack shuffled forward with high spirits. It was a crazy thing to do, this leaving his pack and setting off despite the threat of a returning storm, but he grimly resolved to "do or die."

One thing he completely forgot in his eagerness. That was his sense of direction. After a mile, he remembered, but then it was too late. His landmarks had disappeared, and so the boy turned and plunged forward with new resolution. Surely he ought to gain on the moose, giant though it might be, by the aid of his skis. Once let him get within shot! He never thought of the oddness of his following the moose both to reach his father and to kill the animal itself.

Hour after hour swept by and still he could see no black dot on the white waste ahead. At the top of every hill he strained his eyes hopefully but vainly, then took up the chase with dogged determination again. The thought of

Thompson on his strange trip helped him along and saved him from too much brooding over his own situation.

About noon the snow began to fall once more but there was no blizzard this time. Jack felt grateful for the lack of wind, and the thin snow was not sufficient to cover up the deeply broken trail. It was quite enough, however, to shut out the distance from view and to leave Jack absolutely lost as far as direction was concerned. He gripped his rifle tighter and shuffled on, knowing that now he *must* follow the moose trail or perish. The back trail would soon be gone.

At four o'clock he felt suddenly faint with hunger. Coming to a clump of trees, he stripped some birch bark and very foolishly built his fire beneath a small pine for shelter. He spread out his grub on his blanket and started to cook it hastily.

A few moments later he had learned the lesson every tenderfoot has to learn from experience. The warmth of the fire melted the snow on the heavily laden boughs above, and this with a sudden rush covered fire and blanket from sight and deluged Jack himself. He hastily rescued his

provisions, found his flour practically ruined, and in desperation mixed the whole supply and cooked it over a new fire.

He had under-estimated his own hunger and when he rose from this temporary camp every scrap of his food had vanished. He dared not linger lest the trail be blotted out, so he pushed onward at his best speed. The fine, impalpable snow was no great hindrance but he marvelled at the endurance of the animal, whose sharp hoofs sank so deeply at every step.

"By thunder, I got to catch up mighty quick!" he muttered an hour after leaving his camp. "I see right here where I'm goin' to have a mighty mean night if I don't!"

Still he had not caught sight of the moose. Ahead, the country was getting more rocky and as the dusk began to gather Jack made out a hill or cliff a mile farther on, scattered with clumps of trees and brush. He could not follow the trail after dark, he was numb with the dead, biting cold, and when he approached the hill he determined to camp for the night in its shelter.

"If the moose keeps goin', it's all off," he con-

cluded hopelessly. "By mornin' the trail will be gone. But if he lays up overnight I'll have him! Anyhow, I got to take the chance."

The thought occurred to him that a fire might alarm the moose, but he refused to consider it. His need was vital and he looked about for a suitable camping place. This he found in the shelter of a cliff on the near side of the hill he had approached. He was worn out by his hard journey and every limb was aching; the numbness in his feet and hands alarmed him. The gathering darkness was closing in fast when he saw the rugged cliff blocking his way, and he promptly left the trail for its shelter.

Here the snow was not more than a foot deep. Jack scraped off a bare spot a few feet from the cliff and got a fire started. Then, taking a lesson from Thompson, he leaned a dead sapling against the rock, cut a number of heavy pine-boughs, and stood them over the sapling. This formed a rude lean-to which would shelter him from the snow and would hold in the heat of the fire to some extent. The ground he spread thickly with other pine branches and then rolled up in his blanket, tired and hungry again.

Weary as he was, however, he did not fall asleep immediately. As he gazed into his fire he thought of his father and the finding of the match box. Suppose he had been caught in that blizzard without any matches or food? The very thought left him shivering, but not with cold. His outer moccasins were drying slowly, and as he caught sight of them he remembered Thompson, Axel, and Pierre. What a strange trip he had had! Here were half a dozen men whose lives had been suddenly thrown together in a wilderness and as suddenly broken apart — and so he fell asleep.

He was wakened by cold and found his fire out. Hurriedly removing his moccasins and sox he waded around in the snow until he had some bark and sticks. By the time his fire was going again the gray dawn was spreading over the snow, his feet were aglow, and he realized that he was hungry.

"No time to waste now!" muttered the boy as he struggled into his footgear, reversing the sox and moccasins. Then he picked up his blanket, scattered his fire, and pulling up a notch in his belt, slid out into the desolate dawn.

He could barely see the loom of things through

the dissolving obscurity, and stood looking around. The snow had ceased — and the trail was gone! Clumps of trees and bushes showed vaguely here and there. Rocks jutted up in growing distinctness; one, not far away, seemed of a peculiar shape and Jack resolved to have a look at it. But first he must find the tracks.

His search was vain and left him with despairing heart. The moose trail and his own ski-tracks were blotted out beneath a six-inch snowfall. With a last hope Jack resolved to have a look farther along the hillside and at the country beyond. There was still a chance that the moose had waited over night.

The dawn was spreading fast now. Jack inspected the land behind, but no sign of life appeared and he turned to his course again, intending to have a look at the peculiar rock he had noticed. When he did so, he rubbed his eyes in astonishment. The rock was gone!

Surely he could not have been mistaken, for he remembered that it had been close to another and larger rock which was still in place. Half angrily Jack slipped over the snow toward it. A moment later he reached the larger rock.

"By golly!" The boy stood staring in wild astonishment at the snow. "By golly!" It was all he could say, for there before him was the imprint of the Giant Moose in the snow and the trail of its hoofs. The rock had been the moose itself! He straightened up and gripped his rifle. There was none of that strange fear in his heart now, as he swept a glance over the lightening snow.

The animal was not in sight. Probably it had seen him and had bolted. But in any case, Jack felt with a thrill of exultation, it was only a question of time now. The animal had a few moments' start, no more; the deep snow would impede it tremendously—

"Don't stand around rubberin', you chump!" And with a laugh at himself Jack slipped into his stride, his eye on the fresh tracks ahead. His brain cleared as he did so. He suddenly felt himself in complete mastery of every nerve and muscle; he knew that the situation was in his own hands.

"Mebbe he is a man-killer," reflected the boy as he shuffled on, "but he ain't any worse'n any other moose, I guess. I got to keep out o' reach o' them hoofs, that's all."

The sun broke forth in a flood of light that gave no warmth. No trace of clouds broke the steel blue of the sky, and despite the cold morning Jack felt a hundred per cent better with the bright sunlight cheering him onward. He passed through a clump of young spruce and saw a number of twigs and leaves scattered on the snow. The thought that only a few minutes ago this huge beast, hunted in vain by the best of hunters, had stood in that spot almost within shot of his rifle, thrilled him with the greatest sensation he had ever felt.

Still he did not come within sight of his quarry, though he knew that he must be gaining. Trees were getting thicker now and the snow was not so deep, and as Jack reached the crest of a long slope he saw beneath him a quarter-mile stretch of rather heavy timber. Beyond that stretched an open barren for a mile, then came another patch of trees at the end of the valley-like barren. Beyond this rose a black, timbered ridge perhaps five miles distant.

Jack stared down in incredulous wonder. Had that terrible moose actually plunged through this patch of woods, over that mile stretch of open

barren, and into the timber beyond, all in the few minutes start that he had? Impossible! On the other hand — ah!

Something stirred in the trees below. Feverishly Jack uncovered his rifle and set his sights; moose or other animal, he would try a long shot. He had to have food. For a moment or two no further sign of life came from the timber beneath the crest; then a black object seemed to detach itself from the mass of the trees and slip out across the snow. It was the Giant Moose and Jack trembled as his rifle went up.

The size of the brute appalled him. But he swiftly commanded his nerves and drew a sight on the animal, who broke heavily and painfully through the drifts in the open barren. The sight was a good six hundred yards — but it was his great chance to cripple or kill the beast. With the ivory bead full on the shoulder of the dull black mass, Jack pulled the trigger, slowly and without a jerk.

Out on the plain the Giant Moose stopped short, and the tremendous antlers went up and back with a bellow that came faintly to the boy on the hill. Jack jerked out the shell and raised the

rifle again; but as he did so the moose whirled about and charged back into the trees and his chance was lost.

"I hit him!" exulted Jack as he sped down the slope with gun ready, and searched the trees for a sign of the moose, somewhere in that same patch of woods. "I hit him or he wouldn't 'a' screeched! If I missed his shoulder I bet I landed mighty hard though!"

Now he proceeded cautiously enough among the trees, still on the trail. It would never do to get to close quarters where his skis would render him helpless. So cautiously did Jack proceed that it was a full half hour before he had crossed that quarter mile of forest and came to the edge of the barrens. Still, for some reason, he did not search the open space. He was too busy listening and watching the recesses of the trees about him, and not for five minutes did he look out across the open. When he did so he gave a bitter cry of disappointment, for, just vanishing into the timber a mile ahead, was the form of the moose! It was too late for a shot, and Jack rushed out on the trail without delay.

A moment later he was on the spot where he

had hit the moose. When he came up he gave a cry of exultation, for there, deeply staining the white snow, was a splotch of blood, leading back into the trees and then doubling again out to the timber a mile ahead. He had hit, and hit hard!

As he took a step forward he was brought up short by something that set him trembling and for an instant left him without power to move.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A CRIMSON TRAIL

Far ahead of him, dulled by the snow and the distance, echoed faintly from the surrounding hills, a gunshot had sounded. Somewhere in that wilderness was a rifle — and a man!

Jack regained his self-control with an effort as he realized what that shot might mean, and at full speed he plunged ahead on the crimson trail. Before he was half over the open stretch he noticed that the little splotch of crimson at the edge of each leg-print was gradually growing larger. The wound was evidently bleeding more and more. Perhaps the bullet had cut an artery, in which case the great beast would be brought down from sheer loss of blood.

It took him a quarter of an hour to cross the open, for so deep was the drifted snow here that his skis sank far down at each stroke. The trail led straight for the nearest clump of trees on the far side. The shot which he had heard must have been at least a mile or two distant, for the

morning was deathly still. It seemed improbable that the shot had been fired at the moose and there was only one conclusion, a conclusion that set Jack's blood racing madly.

The race was telling on him by this time. As he came to the first clump of brush he paused and went on slowly. The moose might be far ahead, or it might be waiting for him, and the boy had no idea of running blindly into danger. He had penetrated into the timber a good half mile when he forgot his hunger and weakness in the excitement of a new discovery.

The shot had been fired at the Giant Moose after all! He came suddenly on a crumpled space in the trail, showing plainly, even to his inexperienced eye, that the animal had sunk to its knees or squatted in the snow. As he picked up the trail in growing eagerness he found larger blood-splotches. Who had hit the animal? he wondered. Would he obtain any share in the killing or in the credit for the death of the Giant Moose?

A few steps farther on and his first question was answered, for into the bloody trail of the plunging moose came the leg-holes of men. Jack

could not see whether there were two or three, for the snow was so deep that at each step the pursuers must have sunk to their knees. This made it evident that they had no snowshoes, but the trail itself puzzled the boy strangely. Instead of one, two or three distinct tracks, there would be sometimes a single, deep trail for a few steps. Then would come two trails, and again a queer confusion of leg and footprints that made the boy wonder.

Evidently the moose had been hard hit by this second rifle. Instead of a little crimson mark in the trail there were now great splashes of darker blood. Their size increased and the bounds of the animal itself slowly grew shorter; with rising excitement Jack realized that he must be getting close to the end of the trail.

Then he remembered that Mr. Niles had laughed at moccasins and had said that in the wilderness he would wear heavily nailed boots. Stopping suddenly at a point where the footprints showed plainly enough in the moose-trail, he examined them. Both were moccasins, and he was now sure that only two men had come into the trail.

He hurried on with anxious heart. It seemed

that he had been mistaken after all, and these two men must be Indian hunters. But in that case, why the absence of snowshoes? He caught up a handful of snow to quench his thirst and was instantly sorry; instead of quenching it, the snow only increased it and in addition gave him a feeling of nausea.

"By golly, I'm 'bout all in!" muttered the boy as he shuffled along. He almost forgot the moose in his anxiety to overtake the strange men in order to save his own life. Every step was a terrible effort to his overtaxed muscles, but he set his teeth and struggled on grimly.

At the base of the final slight incline that led to the top of the low, timbered ridge still nearly a mile away, Jack saw something that astonished him and gave him new food for thought. By the side of the trail there was the imprint in the snow of a man's body, lying at full length. All about this the snow was trodden into as though there had been some sort of struggle.

"That's funny," thought Jack, pausing for an instant. "Mebbe they had a scrap." He leaned over the sign. As he did so he swayed and swung headlong into the snow, overcome by his weak-

ness. For a moment he lay there helpless, then struggled up, regained his balance and swept onward. Before he did so he noted dully that the impression of his body in the snow was much like that other which he had just found.

Had one of the two men fallen from exhaustion? His heart sank. If these men, on whom he was depending for aid, were ready to drop, they were not likely to be of much assistance to him. But there was food waiting — when the moose fell. With this thought he plucked up his flagging spirits and went on.

So thick was the timber that he could not see far ahead, but when he was within five hundred yards of the ridge that arose bare and rocky ahead through the trees, he heard a faint noise of scraping hoofs. The Giant Moose was out of the snow! That meant that men who fell in their tracks as they floundered along would have small chance of catching him unless the heavy drain of blood told on the animal.

Only a few hundred yards more! Slowly Jack gained the ledge of rocks, swept free of snow by the wind. Here he shook off his skis and staggered forward on foot. A moment later he came

to a puddle of blood, still unfrozen and steaming, but within a hundred yards the rocks ended and his view with it.

So dense was the timber that the young trailer could not see fifty feet ahead. The snow was thinner and the tracks were much more distinct, however. In a fever of desperate excitement the boy staggered across the rocks and into the trees. His breath came in hoarse gasps and there was a keen pain in his throat, but he had no intention of quitting.

A hundred yards from the rocky ledge, while he was pressing through the dense growth of spruce saplings, he heard another shot from close ahead. The sound was followed by a short sharp bellow, a crashing of branches, and one shout of wild apprehension that thrilled the boy through and through.

Jack plunged ahead in desperation, flinging a cartridge into his chamber and holding his mittened thumb on the cocked hammer of his rifle. That shot could not have been a hundred yards away; if he could only move faster! He had the feeling that he was running in a nightmare. His legs were so heavy, his exertions were so ill-

repaid, that only his dogged determination held him onward. Was he too late?

Then the trees broke away in front of him and he staggered out into an opening with bewildering suddenness. A wind-swept space of clear ground lay before him, on which grew a few stunted bushes, but Jack's eyes were fastened on the scene twenty-five yards to his left.

Here stood the Giant Moose — and what a giant it was! Standing with its head and antlers lowered, facing away from the boy, who could see nothing of the head itself except that the moose was moving it strangely. At one side lay a man on the snow. Suddenly the moose swung around and Jack saw his father.

Clutching the wide-spreading antlers that threw him to and fro, Mr. Seymour was evidently far gone. The moose was unable to lift him, and the razor-like hoofs could not reach his body while the great antlers were dragged down to the ground. With a gasp of horror Jack recognized the danger of his father's situation, and even as he did so the weakened hands loosed their grip. With one toss the Giant Moose flung the man back into the edge of the snow and raised his forefeet.

So rapidly had this happened that Jack scarcely realized it all until he saw his father go backward and the moose rear up. In the very nick of time he pulled up his gun and fired a snap shot at the animal's neck, not waiting to aim. He knew that the shot would at least divert the moose from his father, which was all he thought of.

This it did most effectually, for the soft-nosed bullet actually knocked the moose sideways. The animal fell back on its haunches, facing Jack, and the terrific aspect of the beast paralyzed the boy. He had never imagined such a creature as this!

With great spreading antlers seeming to tower into the sky, high-stretched neck and bristling hair, fiery red eyes and huge nose that spouted red froth over the snow, the tremendous bulk of the Giant Moose seemed twice its real size to the overwrought boy. Jack was absolutely spellbound, and could not fire again; he dimly thought that the creature was dying, and that its squatting was but preliminary to its rolling over. In a flash he understood the reason for the Indian superstitions about this animal, and felt once more, as he had so often felt, the weird influence

What Jack found at the end of the trail of the Giant Moose.

of this gigantic creature of the trackless wilds. Then, as he gazed in awe, those towering antlers seemed to shoot forward and upward, the huge body rose in the air, and the Giant Moose charged.

The lad pumped at his magazine frenziedly. Another leap and the creature would be on top of him; he must stop it, and stop it in one shot. He longed for that 45-70 of his father's, that hit like the hammer of Thor. He remembered that the moose was a man-killer — and thought of his father's body lying at the edge of the snow. A wave of cold anger swept over him as he raised the rifle.

All this passed through his brain as, with lowered head, the Giant Moose took his first spring forward. The brow under those great scooping antlers was his only mark, but Jack knew that the soft-nosed steel clad bullet striking against the plate of the skull, would spread like an umbrella and split a ghastly hole through the animal's brain. As the moose bounded again, Jack pulled trigger and flung himself to one side in a last effort.

There was a spurt of bloody froth across his face, a gasping, choking bellow almost in his ear,

and as the boy rolled over on the ground a hoof of the Giant Moose cut a neat slit in the side of his coat. Then came one great crash, and the huge mass collapsed in a heap.

Jack scrambled up in excitement. That leap aside had without doubt saved his life, as he knew later when he discovered the slit in his coat. He still held his gun, but as he pulled it up, one swift glance at the inert, doubled-up body of the moose showed him that another bullet was not needed.

After all these years of hunting and being hunted, those hoofs that had ground out the life of Jean Lareau and split the skull of old Pete Gilbault were still for ever. The Giant Moose was dead; killed by no cunning of half-breed or Indian or skilled hunter, but by the despised little rifle of a lad of seventeen, Jack Seymour.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### WHERE THE MOOSE LED

Jack heard a voice at the edge of the clearing. It was not the voice of his father and it came from another direction. He looked and saw Mr. Niles leaning against the tree.

"How do you do, Mr. Niles?" cried Jack with the first impulse of politeness.

"Hello, hello, hello," muttered the man. He did not seem to think it strange that the son of his companion should suddenly appear out of the wilderness and shoot down the beast that was about to destroy them both. He seemed to take it as a matter of course. Jack suspected that the man was probably dazed. But he could spend no more time just then in politeness toward Mr. Niles. He left him to puzzle out things the best he could while he ran to the side of his father.

"Father! Father! Are you hurt?" the boy cried, kneeling by his parent's side and straightening out his head. Mr. Seymour was lying in a twisted position, with his head at one side, and

Jack had a horrible fear that the neck was broken.

"Who's that talking?" he mumbled, opening his eyes painfully. By the vigor of his voice the boy knew he was not badly hurt.

"It's Jack, dad."

"Jack? My Jack?" The man struggled to a sitting posture.

"Yes; and I've got the Giant Moose. Look there!" He pointed to the body of the great animal where it lay humped in the snow.

The astonished man looked from the dead animal to his son and then back again. Presently his eyes found Mr. Niles, still leaning against the tree where Jack had first seen him.

"Niles," he said, "what d'you think?"

"We're saved!" replied the man hoarsely.

"But Jack, my boy, my boy," exclaimed Mr. Seymour sitting up and rubbing his head, "where'd you come from? How'd you get here?"

"I'll tell you, dad, when we've time. Are you hurt?"

"I'm not sure," replied Mr. Seymour. "I got a good bump on the head when he bowled me over. Let's see if I'm all here." He stood up

and examined himself, limb by limb, with a slow seriousness that was intended to be a little comical — and was. Jack actually laughed. There was more or less reason for his laughing, though. He had found his father and he had got the Giant Moose. "By cracky!" he said to himself suddenly. "I was right, after all. The moose did bring me to dad!"

"How'd it happen the moose had you down, dad?" asked Jack aloud.

"Well,— No, no, I'm all right, no bones broken and no blood let —" he interrupted himself to say as he finished examining himself. "Well, as I was going to say, we were pluggin' along through the woods headed for Lac Seul or the English, we didn't know which, when I saw Mr. Moose about three hundred yards ahead, making tracks right across us. I fired and I knew I hit. The moose was so surprised it squatted right down in the snow and looked around. Then it made off and we after him.

"I wasn't sure it was the Giant Moose, but from its size, I thought it was. Well, we got here finally, although I had to pick Niles out of the snow several times —"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Jack.

"How do you know?"

"I followed you and saw where he had been down."

"Oh! Well, we got here and found his nibs waiting for us, looking pretty savage. I let him have another. The beast squatted just the way he had before and I was sure I had finished him. But he jumped into the air and came at me. I wasn't ready, and down I went. The next thing I knew somebody was calling me and I saw you."

"Where's your camp?" the boy asked eagerly when his father finished.

"We haven't any. We've been traveling for three or four days now with what we have on our backs and in our pockets. But where did you come from? And how did you get here?"

Jack grinned at his surprise. "Why, Jan and Axel and I came out to look for you when we didn't hear from you. Jan and Pierre Tache, a half-breed we got to guide us, are in camp back on the English River — somewhere. Axel and Sandy McNicolls have started around the south side of Lac Seul."

"Is that so? So you came out for your old

dad, did you? Niles, what d'you think o' that? Here's a lad that came out and found his old dad perishing in the wilderness!"

"You don't mean you're perishing, dad?" Jack cried. "Did the Indians leave you?"

"We've been up against it, boy, from the start," returned his father. "And let me tell you that some of that moose meat is going to taste mighty good to me."

"Me, too," said Jack. "I haven't had a bite for nearly twenty-four hours."

"How's mother?" asked Mr. Seymour abruptly.

"She was pretty much worried. We must get word to her as soon as we can."

"That's bothered me more than anything else. But how does it happen you haven't had anything to eat for over twenty-four hours?" he went on. "You say you have a camp back on the English?"

"Yes, but I don't know where, now, and I've been trailing this moose since yesterday afternoon."

"Where were you in the blizzard?"

"Under a rock and the moose under another, not a hundred yards away. Where were you?"

"We found a rock with some bushes behind it and we rolled up in our blankets. Haven't you any blankets, Jack?"

"I didn't expect to be gone from camp overnight. But it's a long story, dad. Let's have something to eat first."

Even Mr. Niles brisked up at the prospect of food. They moved toward the carcass of the moose.

"We'll have to eat it raw," said Mr. Seymour. "I haven't a match."

"I have," said Jack as with a grin he produced the waterproof box.

"That's mine!" cried Mr. Seymour. "Where'd you find it?"

"Where you lost it, at Forty Mile Point."

"I'd have given my sawmill for that last night," said Mr. Seymour.

"I'd have given it to you for nothing, dad," said Jack.

Mr. Seymour patted him on the back. Then they fell to the moose, sending Niles to gather wood. He gathered a pitiable handful or two and came back complaining that he could not find more.

"Go and get some, Jack, my boy," said the father.

Tired as he was, Jack got together wood for a good fire, and had it roaring by the time his father was ready with the meat. They did not take great pains with the pelt at that time, being more anxious to get at the meat. Mr. Seymour heated some of the flesh through and they ate it dripping, unable to wait until it was cooked. But the second helping was less savage, and the third, thanks to the interested care Mr. Seymour took in its preparation, was quite well roasted. It was astonishing what a difference the food made in Jack. Before he had eaten he was ready to drop in his tracks. Almost at once he felt able to set out to discover Jan and Pierre. And, in spite of the three days he had been advancing alone, he had a wild idea that he could find his companions before nightfall.

Jack told his experiences in detail. On the morning of the fourth day after he and Jan and Pierre separated from Axel and Sandy, Jack and his friends had parted at the Beaver Lake camp. They were to advance by parallel lines and meet that evening at a place known to Pierre, eight

miles up the river. But instead of reaching this rendezvous that night, Jack had wandered far from the river and when he met Thompson, the strange Indian, and passed the night with him, he was ten miles from the river.

"But," explained the boy, "I was certainly not ten miles further east. Quite likely I wasn't more than five miles to the east. And, if I was, I was still three miles down the river from Pierre and Jan."

"But you don't know that they reached the proposed camping place," argued his father.

"Trust Pierre for that," urged Jack. "They not only reached it but you can be sure, since that was the only place we were to meet, that my friends are there now — waiting for me; perhaps they're lookin' for me; anyway, that's where they're waitin'."

"How far is that from here?" asked Mr. Seymour. "You don't know, do you?"

The boy shook his head but not despairingly.

"I only know this," he said in a few moments; "I'll find it."

"There's six inches of snow on your trail, or most of it," exclaimed Mr. Niles. "We'd better all go together."

"I'm not goin' to try to find my trail," said Jack at once. "I couldn't if I tried. It's a case o' headwork now. But I think it'd be easy for Pierre or Sandy. I'm goin' to try to do what I think they'd do or what anyone would do who isn't scared — keep cool and figure."

Mr. Seymour shook his head. "Let's all try to go ahead together," he suggested but with no great show of spirits.

"I can do it best alone," answered Jack. "I feel I can, and I want you to let me. You wait here and I'll bring help sometime to-morrow. Then we'll go ahead and get to Lac Seul."

"What do you plan to do?" asked his father, as if partly reconciled.

"This is my idea," answered the boy, putting on a bold front. "When I left, the Indian was some miles north of the river, perhaps five or six, and west of where Pierre and Jan were to make camp. Yesterday I came east all day but I'm sure I did not cross the river. Last night I camped under a cliff and I'm sure it wasn't ten miles from where I slept with the Indian. To-day I still came east and I'm sure I was bearing toward the river all the time. It isn't more than

four or five miles from my cliff camp to this open land. If I'm right we're about fifteen miles east of Pierre's camp. I'm goin' to start southwest from here till I strike the ice on the English and then go straight down the river. If I don't find the camp by night I'll find it in the morning. I can't miss it. If Pierre and Jan are gone, they'll leave word. Isn't that reasonable? And think how Jan will be worrying about me."

"Of course they'll be anxious about you," Mr. Seymour went on, "but a couple of strong men can stand a little worry. And when they see you they will forget that they have been worried. Sorry about Axel, though. I wish we could head him off from his long hike around the lake."

"Perhaps I can head 'em off," suggested Jack, knowing perfectly well at the time that he could not.

"No, Jack," said his father shaking his head. "This is what we'll do. We'll spend the rest of this day getting the hide and horns off your moose and cutting up the meat to take with us. Then Mr. Niles and I will follow your trail to the river and strike out for Lac Seul Post while you go back and pick up Jan and your guide. We'll

go slowly along the bank of the lake, and you can overtake us. We'll carry what meat we can, and when you come back you can pick up the rest. We'll cache it meanwhile."

"But why don't you wait here until I get Jan and Pierre and bring them up?" Jack inquired.

"Because we travel too slowly," with an inclination of the head toward Mr. Niles, "and we'd do well to take a head start. I want to get somewhere as soon as I can and get word to your mother. We were headed for White Dog, but if Axel is making for Lac Seul we'll have to go there. We can get out from there."

"We'll build a sled," Jack exclaimed, "and then you can carry plenty of the meat. I'll take a sling of it under my shoulder when I go back for the others. You can leave the antlers and hide; we'll pick them up."

They settled the details and set to work on the sled. It was arranged that Jack should try to reach the appointed camp and bring up Jan and the half-breed. Meanwhile Mr. Seymour and Niles would be working up the river toward the post on Lac Seul. Jack, if successful, would return that way with the camp outfit and overtake

them. Then they would all proceed to the post, from which they would send word to Mrs. Seymour and wait for Axel. After that they would go out to the southward, striking the C. P. R. near Raleigh.

The afternoon was devoted to the construction of the sled, in which work Jack was quite an adept, having seen it done once, and in preparing the meat of the Giant Moose for transportation and consumption.

And that night, about the camp fire, wrapped in the hide of the Giant Moose, and well lined with meat from the same source, Jack listened to the story of the experiences of the two hunters.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE STORY OF THE FAITHLESS GUIDES

"Everything went wrong from the start," Mr. Seymour began. "We got off wrong when we took those Indian guides. If we hadn't been in such a hurry we could have found better ones. Anyway, we couldn't have found anyone worse."

"We'd have been there yet, looking for some one to take us in," growled Mr. Niles. He was sensitive about the guides, for it had been on his account that they had taken the Indians.

"But we wouldn't have been here waiting for some one to take us out," retorted Mr. Seymour with his hearty laugh. "I'd rather never start than never get back."

"It really wasn't the fault of the guides," Mr. Niles insisted.

"Oh, no, it wasn't the fault of the guides," returned Mr. Seymour ironically. "Of course they couldn't help being drunk the first two days and they couldn't help dragging us into the inside of the continent. And one of 'em couldn't

help running off to his tribe when we needed him most, after we'd paid for his services. And the other couldn't help stealing our canoe and rifles and provisions. Oh, no, it wasn't the Indians' fault; they couldn't help it at all."

Mr. Niles gave signs of some sort of retort, but Mr. Seymour prevented it by proceeding with his narrative. "We got away from White Dog as we expected, although our guides were in no condition to travel. I ought to have known better, but I was so glad to get into the woods that I was pretty good-natured."

"Oh, you were not in any hurry yourself, I thought," put in Mr. Niles, sarcastically. "You knew better than to take the Indians all the time but you did it to oblige me. I didn't ask you to hire them." Mr. Seymour looked at Jack and winked.

"Anyway, we started with them," Mr. Seymour went on. "We got along fine the first day, and the second was not bad until we got into camp at Forty Mile Point. Then Freckles began to get ugly. The drink was dying in him and I found him trying to go through the pack to see if he could find more liquor. I gave him a kick. I

suppose you should never kick an Indian, but I must say I kicked him pretty hard.

"Maybe he would not have made any trouble about it if old Pock-Mark had not laughed at him. He could not stand that and began to pitch into his partner. One of them had a hunting knife and the other an axe when I finally broke up the affair. That night I spent most of my time lying awake in my blankets to see that the guides did not murder each other — or us."

"You acted like an old maid about those guides," commented Mr. Niles. "They wouldn't have touched us."

"They didn't, anyway," replied Jack's father with a smile. "It must have been in the scuffle that I lost the match box. I didn't miss it until some time afterwards and I wasn't sure when it slipped out of my pocket. I had my hands full with the fighters for a while." Mr. Seymour laughed heartily.

"I'm hanged if I was going to have my throat slit open by a half drunken savage for the sake of saving another half drunken savage," observed Mr. Niles, apparently in defense of his neutrality.

"Oh, those Indians wouldn't have touched us,"

laughed Mr. Seymour, using Niles' own remark against him. "Well, after we left Forty Mile Point we planned to travel one more day and then make our camp. We wanted to get to hunting as soon as we could and not waste any of our precious time traveling up and down the river. We told the Indians to hurry but they loafed along as slowly as they could. I don't think we made more than fifteen miles that day."

"You didn't," said Jack. "We camped in the same place."

"Yes? Well, we told 'em we would go ahead one more day, or a half day, and then make our permanent camp. We should have been there in two days instead of taking four for it. We had four paddles and all were working most of the time. Mr. Niles' hands got sore, and he could not be at it all the time, but at that we should have made more than twenty miles a day.

"That night, when we reached a camping place, we ordered the Indians to take everything out of the canoe. The rascals refused to do it. They shook their heads and grunted, squatting on their heels. Finally we got out of them a statement that the place was not a good one for hunting and

that we would do much better on the northern shore of Lac Seul.

"There seemed to be some reason in that, as Axel had told us moose were more plentiful along Lac Seul. The Indians insisted they knew where there were plenty of moose and they could take us there. This region was only a two days' trip from where we were.

"I was for staying even if it came to open trouble with the guides. I was ready to sail into them with anything from a butcher knife to a 45-70, but Mr. Niles didn't want trouble and finally we gave in. We were to have seventeen days at the outside from White Dog back to Lac du Bonnet again and eleven or twelve of them were to be spent in canoes. I roared at Niles good and plenty about it but he wouldn't have any trouble with the Indians and so we packed off."

During the latter part of his narration, Mr. Seymour had been casting glances at Mr. Niles and finally discovered that the man had fallen asleep. Then he was freer in discussing things.

"Mr. Niles hasn't been himself since we set out," he explained. "Sometimes I got mad at him but afterward I was sorry for it. He's been

upset and he's had an awfully hard time. You'll see before I get through.

"Well, we reached a place where the Indians were willing to stay, after we had been in the canoe for five days altogether. They pitched our camp and the next morning Pock-Mark took Mr. Niles out for a hunt, while Freckles and I went in another direction. Neither of us got a thing but when I got back I found Niles limping around with a sore heel. His shoe didn't fit him and he wouldn't wear the moccasins that Axel made for him. He's got them on now, though.

"The next morning, in spite of his sore heel, he went out again and the next day the same. By that time his heel was in bad shape. He was obstinate about it and wouldn't wear the moccasins. Freckles went out into the barrens and came back with some weeds which he mixed with hot mud and put on the sore. That night it began to swell. I don't know what it would have done without the weeds but it certainly did puff up. It pained him so that he rolled on the ground and yelled with pain.

"We had been there three days by that time and were eight days out from White Dog. If we

were going to get back to Lac du Bonnet before the first of November we would have to leave our camp in two days. It was then the twenty-second and it would take six days at least to get down to Bonnet.

"At the end of two days Mr. Niles could no more travel than he could fly. His leg was swollen and he had a fever. We stuck around doctoring and nursing him but there was nothing we could do but put on the weeds and mud that Freckles prepared for him. I don't know yet whether Freckles was trying to poison him or whether he saved the man's life.

"If I had had any idea that Niles was going to be so sick, I would have sent one of the guides to Lac Seul at once for help as it was not more than seventy-five or eighty miles. But I expected him to get better each day and I knew he would want to travel as soon as he was well enough. He agreed with me and would not have me send.

"About the first of November the scoundrelly Pock-Mark disappeared. Freckles told us that he had left to join his people in the fall hunt. I went and looked at our guns. My little .305 Savage and a lot of ammunition were gone.

"I grabbed Freckles by the back of the neck and made him lead me after the other Indian but he gave me the double cross, of course, and we never saw Pock-Mark again. After that I kept a pretty close lookout. We hung around camp for ten days after that. Mr. Niles was slowly getting better but he was weak.

"At last we made up our minds that we would wait no longer. Mr. Niles said he could make it all right as the inflammation had nearly gone out of his leg and the sore was not so painful. So we set the next day for our departure.

"When we rolled out of our blankets the next morning the canoe was gone. There was nothing left in camp but some bacon and flour and a few cans of tinned goods, together with the bedding and blankets we were using. I had put my gun under my head when I went to sleep and that was safe. Mr. Niles' rifle was gone and so were the shoes that had hurt his feet.

"There was one little pack I was using for a pillow that the Indian did not take. He was very careful not to rout me out. In this packet was the pair of moccasins that Axel had made which Niles would not wear. He was glad enough now to put them on.

" At first we didn't know what to do. I knew there was no use spending time and energy chasing the Indian who had decamped with the canoe. I didn't even know whether he had gone down or up the river. Mr. Niles was for striking out to Lac Seul Post but I objected. I told him that by this time our friends would have set out to find us and they would be looking for us on the English River. I told him we would strike out for the English and follow it down toward White Dog. If we did not meet anyone looking for us we could make shift to get into White Dog after a while.

" Well, that was what we started to do and we made packs of what we had. It was hard work for Mr. Niles. His legs were wobbly and his heel was rather tender. We did not make many miles the first day or the next. At night we were not very comfortable. Of course we could not attempt to pack our tents out with us and we slept in the open. It was pretty cold. The fourth night out we had a heavy snow. You had it too, of course. We got under the drifts and kept reasonably warm. That was the first tolerably comfortable night we had. But it was a night of disaster that almost terminated in a tragedy. When we went

to bed we left our provisions out on the ground where the fire had melted the snow. In the morning when we got up not a shred of them was left. Porcupines had taken everything!"

"Gee!" exclaimed Jack.

"They had even gnawed the butt of my rifle. You can see where they chewed it." Jack looked and saw. "Then we were certainly up against it. We started out with our blankets and I was hoping to see something I could shoot to give us a meal. But we tramped two days without a sight of anything.

"The second night the blizzard came on. We found a place in the shelter of a rock and I set out to make a fire. It would keep us warm, even if there was nothing we could cook on it. Mr. Niles' matches were all gone and I felt for mine. Then it was that I found I had lost my box. And the loss of it was pretty nearly fatal. I never was so cold in my life. I had to rouse myself continually from the stupor that precedes freezing and I had to shake Mr. Niles as often.

"My boy, you know the rest. We stumbled up in the morning and started once more for the river. Honestly, I thought it was going to be my last day

and I knew it would finish Niles. I was carrying most of the pack, and the rifle, but he could barely creep along, at that. Then, the things happened that brought us together. There is only one thing more I could wish for, Jack."

"What's that?" He was very sleepy; the warmth of the moose skin was comforting, and the moose in his insides was more so.

"I wish mother could know we are safe."

"So do I," said the boy and giving way to his exhaustion he fell asleep.

They did not realize that they were not yet safe. They had forgotten that Jack himself was lost.

## CHAPTER XX

### LOST IN THE WHITE NORTH

Jack was awakened in the middle of the night by the howling of the wind in the trees. They had made their camp at the edge of the clearing. The boy was aware that he was bitterly cold. The skin of the moose, in which he had wrapped himself, was frozen so stiff that he could not draw it close to his neck.

The fire was almost out. Jack crawled out to throw on more wood. Once on his feet, he felt the full force of the wind and the sting of hard-driven snow against his face. The blizzard of the night before had returned.

He knew it would not do for the two men to lie where they were, exposed to the full blast of the wind, but he did not see another place for them. Then the carcass of the moose caught his eye. The back bone was turned toward the wind. Mr. Seymour, in removing the meat, had done no more than hack off what he wanted. It was not a skillful piece of butchery and there was plenty of meat

left on the bones to keep off the wind. Jack awoke the two men and made then snuggle down behind the animal. Then he rebuilt the fire, keeping himself alert with the exercise.

He did not sleep again. Now and then he crept to where his father and Mr. Niles were sheltered, and stirred them awake. Mr. Niles was alarmingly drowsy. Jack did not know how much more he could stand. Mr. Seymour was up early. He had been so tired and exhausted that he had not realized what Jack had been doing. Between them they fixed up another meal of the moose and served it.

The wind still howled and the snow still swept across the clearing. In the sky was no sign that the storm would grow less that day. Jack, finishing breakfast, argued that he ought to start at once for the camp on the English. Mr. Niles' condition was such that it was apparent the man could not travel. He urged that the plan for his father and Mr. Niles to try to reach the river and make their way to the lake and Lac Seul Post be abandoned. Despite the new snow and wind he was confident he could execute his own project.

"Are you sure you can do it, Jack?" asked his

father anxiously. "I don't want to put any more miles between us than we have to."

"Sure I can do it. I know it. I won't have any trouble. I'm gettin' used to this."

"And you think we ought to stay here and wait?"

"Niles and you have got to stay right here," urged Jack positively. "He's all in, father. Don't try to move him before we come up. Keep the fire goin', and don't let him fall too deeply asleep."

"Aye, aye, sir!" laughed the father, making a shivering salute to his son. He was pleased at the lad's directions. Also, he was amused at Jack's making free with the name of Mr. Niles without the handle.

Placing a strip of the moose meat under his arm with his rifle, Jack stepped out of the timber into the full blast of the blizzard to find his way to Pierre and Jan. Luckily, the wind was behind him. He could hardly have battled against the pressure. It was not a perfectly simple task that confronted the lad. He had to make his way over an untracked wilderness. The driving snow almost obscured the view and he could rarely see

more than a quarter of a mile. His success depended on his being able to pick up the frozen bed of the English.

Jack knew in what direction the river lay and he had a compass. By this he set his course to the southwest. Of course the trail of the day before meant nothing to him now. The new storm had wholly obliterated this and, besides, this trail led far out of his new course. He would depend entirely on his compass until he reached the frozen river.

The cold wind, mingled with snow, did not cease for a moment to churn about him. He was soon chilled through and through. His legs were weak and his feet were beginning to get sore. He had not been caring for them of late as faithfully as he should. By noon he felt he was doing little better than wandering. He kept his compass handy, referring to it frequently and now and then shifting his course farther south. The blizzard kept up, though by this time the wind had moderated slightly.

Some time after noon, as nearly as he could estimate, Jack suddenly remembered that the river was a most tortuous stream. It was a suc-

cession of long, wide bends. On his present course — he was now out in the open and on the barrens — the only timber he could see to the southwest was miles away. Almost directly west, and much nearer, he could make out a line of trees. These seemed to bear away to the south toward the distant trees. He might be working away from the river and in this way adding to his route by heading toward some deep bend. He pressed his lips together and started on again, this time heading directly west.

In about three-quarters of an hour the panting boy gave a shout of joy. The trees opened up before him and, beyond mistake, he could, even from a distance, make out the wide, white open space between that could mean but one thing — the frozen, snow-covered bed of the English. As if this were the final goal of his struggle Jack sprang ahead and, his covered face dripping with perspiration, slid among the trees of the thin forest marking the nearer bank of the stream.

Jack knew that another night in the open without blankets would be likely to prove fatal, for he had left all the bedding and the moose skin for Mr. Niles and his father. But his body and brain

were so numb from the strain that the possibility of death gave him no acute sensation. He felt it in a vague way only and spurred himself to the struggle by the thought of his father waiting for him on the plateau where he had found and left him.

The broad white path lay before him. He was about to spring upon the smooth surface when, in a moment's pause, reason came back to him. Seeking the meagre shelter of a clump of birches, he leaned against a tree and drew from his pocket a half frozen bit of baked moose meat. As he recovered his breath he ate. He began to feel drowsy, too, but he easily shook off the feeling and, somewhat before the middle of the afternoon, as he judged, renewed in courage and strength, he began his river journey.

For the next hour Jack felt wonderfully renewed in vigor. Great patches of wind-swept ice occurred now and then and on these the desperate boy — now grown skilled in the use of his skis — slid forward as if on skates. The bed of the river narrowed at times and the trees crowded forward to cast deep shadows on the snow. Again, in the bends, the boy's line of advance seemed to lead

him into caves of gloom from which no egress appeared until, plunging restlessly onward, he would see the bend of the stream open out a new vista of ice and snow, barren trees and endless, arctic wastes.

There was no way to measure distance. The monotony of the freezing advance made the boy desperate. At times he counted his steps, telling himself that he would not again take his meaningless bearings until he had counted a thousand paces. In this operation he sometimes got his mind off his sufferings and fears. He became confused, too, in his count; then he argued the matter with himself and this helped him. Once he picked up a snow-encrusted twig. Then he started counting anew. At each hundred paces he broke off a bit of the stick. When he should have ten bits that would mean a thousand paces in advance — an advance that would bring him, he calculated, nearly a mile, either nearer help or that much farther into the wilderness.

At last it began to grow dark. The lone messenger had heard no sign of life for hours. Neither deer nor moose had sounded an alarm in the deathlike stillness all the long afternoon. As the

darkness grew, Jack felt himself failing. At last he began to wonder what Pierre or McNicolls would do in such an extremity. They would make camp for the night. He now ceased counting and began to watch the deeply shadowed banks for a refuge, some hole into which he could crawl to pass the dark hours. Then complete darkness came.

The boy knew he must be on the right track. But where was he? How far had he come? Somehow he forgot the thought of making camp. He was now going on mechanically, his tired, trembling limbs swinging into place like pendulums. Then, suddenly, he tripped and fell. He tried to spring to his feet but his legs were like lead. Now he must camp. As he searched the shadows for the river bank a last recourse came to him. He would fire his revolver as a signal. This he did; five times, at long intervals, as Sandy had done at Forty Mile Point.

The exhausted lad hardly expected an answer. Still he strained his ears for any sound. And then, far down the river, he saw a red glow. For a second he thought his eyes were playing him false. He rubbed them and looked again;

the light was still there. It was the glow of a fire. He shouted and finally got on his feet again, stumbling forward. His stop had made it difficult for him to carry himself, for his muscles had relaxed in spite of him.

Stumbling through the drifts, suddenly he heard a faint halloo. With a little whine of joy in his throat he answered it with his rifle, stumbling on. The halloo was repeated, growing louder. Five minutes later Jack fell exhausted into the arms of Jan Jaeger.

## CHAPTER XXI

### LAC SEUL AND THE GREAT PRIZE

The next thing Jack knew, he was lying on a bed of fir boughs in a snug lean-to tent, with the warmth of a broad fire stealing deliciously along his numb limbs. Over the fire squatted Jan Jaeger, stewing something. The smell of it brought tears to the boy's eyes.

"Where's Pierre?" Jack asked dreamily. His mind happened to begin to work at that point.

"He's trailin' you," answered Jan, looking Jack over closely as if to see that he was all there. "He set out up the river yesterday."

"I've found him!" exclaimed the young man sprawled on the bed.

A quick light jumped into Jan's eyes and he looked more closely at his chum. He was afraid the boy's brain had been touched a little by his experiences.

"Who?" he demanded.

"Dad and Mr. Niles. They're up there," lifting an arm heavily. "They're all right, but

Niles is pretty near all in. We must start for them in the morning. And say! I got the Giant Moose!"

Jack had to go over the story twice, exhausted as he was, before Jan could be entirely satisfied that the tale was not a dream springing from a disturbed brain. That, and the amount of stew he ate before he finally turned in, kept Jack awake several hours, but he went to sleep at last, refreshed in body and mind. He had only one unhappiness; he could not be sure that the two men were coming through the night as well as he was.

He was still tired in the morning but not yet out of commission. He had had a good pair of legs on him when he left Menominee, and the time spent trudging through the snow since then had made them not less serviceable. And he was borne up, too, by the thought of his father and Mr. Niles waiting somewhere off there on a ridge.

The wind had died out during the night. The weather was still very cold and snow was falling, but travel was not impossible. The two boys broke camp and packed everything on the sled. A heavy day's work was ahead of them. They

must drag the sled before night to the place where Jack had left his father and Mr. Niles.

Even in the silent storm the two boys made their way bravely up the river. With his friend by his side, Jack felt his spirits wholly revived. Not even the falling snow could now mislead them. The unmistakable big bend where Jack had struck the river was mark enough and at this place, where the trail to his father's camp began, Jack had carefully noted all landmarks.

Jan explained how he and Pierre had met at the rendezvous and how for three days they had scoured the country round about for signs of the missing Jack. Only the morning before, Jan and Pierre, seaching together, had come across the "lean-to" by the bluff where Jack had camped with the Indian on the first night of his wandering. Every foot of the camp site had been examined by the crafty half-breed. No detail escaped the skilled woodsman. At last, buried under a foot of soft, new snow (through which the Indian had carefully penetrated to the icy surface of the last previous fall) Pierre found the direction sticks of Thompson the Indian. It was enough for him. Sending Jan back to the camp

on the river the half-breed took the trail after Jack at noon of the day before.

"Hold on there!" cried Jack, as Jan told about the finding of the sticks left by Thompson. "You're twisted there, 'cause Thompson left those sticks to guide me to the river. I chased off clear in the other direction after I found the moose."

"I know," smiled Jan. "I was coming to that. Pierre was starting off in the direction the sticks pointed when he suddenly stopped and called me. You see, if you had gone that way you would have struck the river, and you must have found us. You didn't find us, so it was a cinch that you hadn't followed the pointers, for some reason.

"We were stumped for quite a while, tryin' to figure that out. Then we spread out and made a big circle through the snow, tryin' to find another trail on the hard crust below. That ain't so easy as it sounds, either. Your skis didn't leave much trail an' I had just about given up when Pierre let out a yell.

"He had found some kind of trail down below, and we scraped away the snow mighty careful for

a yard or two. Then we saw that it was either a moose or deer trail, an' made out a ski-scrape or two over it. That settled the matter right off, you see."

"An' now it's up to us," declared Jack. "Well, come ahead!"

With stops at ten o'clock and at noon for rest and tea, the two determined boys plodded steadily up their frozen pathway. About three o'clock the wide sweep of the bend lay before them. It was cold and still snowing but the steady march and the loaded sled kept the boys in a perspiration. Once out of the river bed the trail became a problem, but Jack's sense of direction now helped them. For an hour they held their course by the line of the trees on the curve of the river. Then, as these faded on the horizon, the compass came into service.

An hour later the barrens began to disappear in the ridge on which the two suffering men were waiting. Along the base of this Jack and Jan hurried with new vigor looking for familiar landmarks. When Jack thought he detected signs of a place known to him, they toiled up the rocky slope. Then they became more certain. Jack

recognized nothing in particular but it was the ridge along which he had followed the wounded moose and the boy seemed to "feel" his way as he recalled that experience.

From the point where they mounted the ridge they struck straight for the opposite highland. Reaching this at last, about four o'clock, Jack fired his revolver. There was an almost instant response from a heavier firearm.

Two men came hurrying through a fringe of trees to meet them. Jack thought it strange that Mr. Niles had so far revived. Another look told him that it was not Mr. Niles but Pierre Tache who was with his father.

Pierre, they soon learned, had followed Jack's trail by instinct on his first day's journey after leaving Jan in camp. He had followed it, making but slow progress, and then the blizzard of the succeeding night had wiped it out and he had not picked it up again until he found, dim beneath the snow, the trail left by the moose and its pursuer. From there he made his way to the ridge where Mr. Seymour and Mr. Niles were sheltered behind the carcass of the moose. And he was just in time. Niles had passed into a stupor

from which it was difficult to awaken him and Mr. Seymour was drowsing in the first advance of death by freezing.

Pierre had improved the shelter with boughs and packed snow, built up the fire, cooked a stew for the men and soon had them back to life. He did not dare leave them to follow Jack.

"No worry 'bout dat boy," he had told Mr. Seymour, when it was suggested that he go to make sure that Jack found Jan. "He go on de rivaire, an' he comin' back on de rivaire."

Now they set up the lean-tos in the woods near the edge of the clearing and established a comfortable camp to rest a day or two before going on to Lac Seul. Pierre and Jan took the guns and went out, bringing in a deer. They might need it before they got through to Lac Seul and, besides, the Giant Moose did not prove very good eating, being rather tough and rank.

At the end of three days they set out, dragging Mr. Niles on one of the two sleds and the antlers and hide of the Giant Moose, with the provisions and the tents, on the other. They had little left in the way of provisions; barely enough to get them through to the lake. There they

would take in a new supply, rest a couple of days and then strike out for the C. P. R.

Jack felt like an old Hudson's Bay man before they got to the post. He felt the cold much less, although the temperature fell more than once below zero. He could stand hard work better and his spirits were high.

His father was like a boy now and his only anxiety was to get word through to his wife. Mr. Niles revived wonderfully. On the second day of their travels he left the sled and would not return to it. In another day he was giving a hand with the sled ropes and fetching wood with Jack for the camp fires. Mr. Niles, as Mr. Seymour had said, had been worried by business cares. Having stared death in the face a few days, he had come to understand that business was really not the most important thing in the world, and had forgotten his troubles.

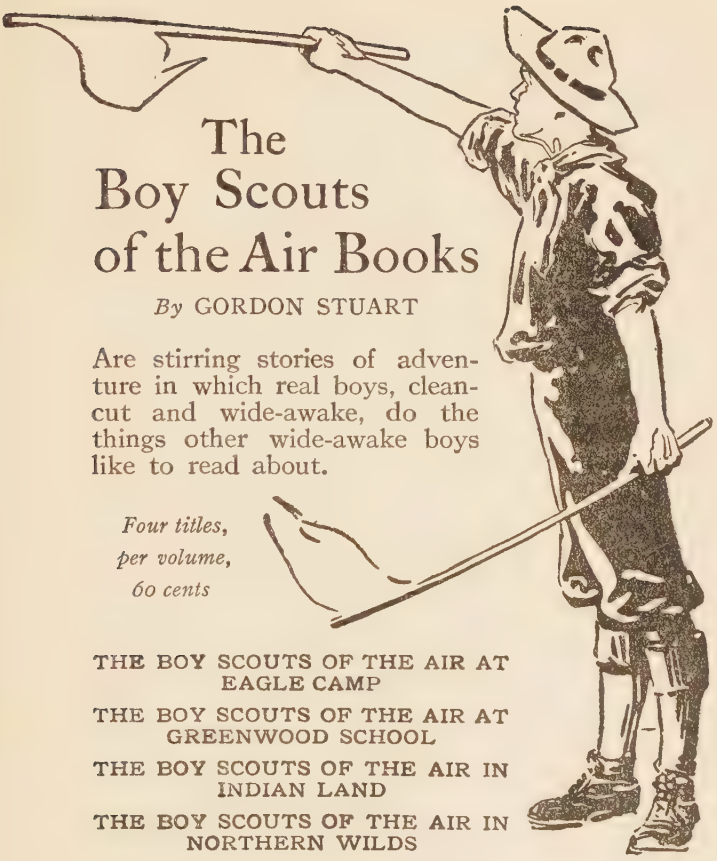
Lac Seul Post was turned upside down by the arrival of the party with the trophies of the Giant Moose. The fame of the beast was known from one end of the country to the other. Many of the old timers looked on the lad Jack, who had brought the monster low, with a sort of

superstitious reverence. Jack enjoyed it all very much. He had too much humor to be spoiled by it, although, of course, he was proud of what he had done.

Axel and Sandy McNicolls had been at the post several days before the other party came in. As soon as Mr. Seymour arrived, he sent a courier out to Raleigh, to take word of their safety. Five days later the party outfitted at the post and followed, crossing the barrens and wilds in good shape. Sandy McNicolls and Pierre Tache were to take out the cached canoes the following spring.

If you ever go to Menominee, call in at the office of the Seymour Mill and Lumber company, and you can see for yourself the antlers of the Giant Moose, the largest ever brought in. They are eighty-two inches across and perfect.

And if you will let them know who you are, Jack Seymour himself will be glad to tell you how they came to be on the office wall.



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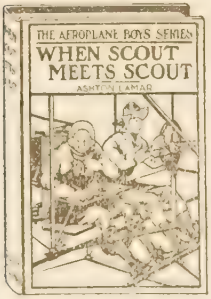


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